THE WANING OF THE TWO GIANTS:

THE ELECTORAL DECLINE OF THE ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

by

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Abstract

Italy is currently experiencing profound political change. One aspect of this change involves the decline in electoral support for the Italian Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), now the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). Signs of the electoral decline of both parties began to appear in the late 1970s and early 1980s and accelerated in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to explain the electoral decline of the DC and PCI/PDS in the last decade. The central question being addressed in this thesis is the following: What factors contributed to the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI? In addition, the thesis attempts to better comprehend the change in magnitude and direction of the Italian party system.

The thesis examines the central question within an analytical framework that consists of models explaining electoral change in advanced industrial democracies and in Italy. A review of the literature on electoral change in Italy reveals three basic models: structural (socioeconomic and demographic factors), subcultural (the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures), and political (factors such as party strategy, and the crisis and collapse of communism in

Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and the end to the Cold War).

Significant structural changes have occurred in Italy, but they do not invariably hurt or benefit either party. The Catholic and Communist subcultures have declined in size and strength, but only gradually. More importantly, the study discovers that the decline of communism and party strategy adversely affected the electoral performances of the DC and PCI.

The basic conclusion is that political factors primarily and directly contributed to the decline in electoral support for both parties, while societal factors (structural and subcultural changes) played a secondary and indirect role. While societal factors do not contribute directly to the decline in electoral support for both parties, they do provide the context within which both parties operated.

In addition, the Italian party system is becoming more fragmented and traditional political parties are losing electoral support to new political movements, such as the *Lega Nord* (LN-Northern League) and the *Rete* (Network). The growing importance of the North-South and centre-periphery cleavages suggests that the Italian party system, which is traditionally based on religious and ideological cleavages, may be changing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	*Azione Cattolica* (Catholic Action)
ACLI	*Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani* (Association of Italian Christian Workers)
CGIL	*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (Italian General Confederation of Labour)
CISL	*Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori*(Confederation of Workers' Unions)
CL	*Communione e Liberazione* (Communion and Liberation)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DC	*Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democratic Party)
DP	*Democrazia Proletaria* (Proletarian Democracy)
FLM	*Federazione di Lavoratori Metalmeccanici* (Federation of Metalmechanical Workers)
LL	*Lega Lombarda* (Lombard League)
LN	*Lega Nord* (Northern League)
LNC	*Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative* (National League of Cooperatives)
MSI	*Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement)
PCI	*Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party)
PDS	*Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (Democratic Party of the Left)
PLI	*Partito Liberale Italiano* (Italian Liberal Party)

PPI	*Partito Popolare Italiano* (Italian Popular Party)
PRad	*Partito Radicale* (Radical Party)
PRI	*Partito Repubblicano Italiano* (Italian Republican Party)
PSDI	*Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano* (Italian Social Democratic Party)
PSI	*Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party)
RC	*Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation)
UIL	*Unione Italiana del Lavoro* (Union of Italian Labour)

The Regions and Provinces of Italy

Source: David Hine, Governing Italy: The Politics of Bargained Pluralism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. vii.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Italian political system is notorious for its governmental instability. This is not surprising as there have been 52 governments since 1945. Despite governmental instability, Italy has been politically stable because, for most of the post-war period, the Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana*-DC) has been the main governing party and the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*-PCI) has been the main opposition party. The continued dominance of the DC in government and the PCI in opposition, coupled with governmental instability produced a state of "stable instability" in Italian politics.[1] However, in the last few years, this "stable instability" has yielded to instability and change, which has largely occurred because of a noticeable decline in electoral support for the DC and the PCI in the last decade.[2] The decrease in electoral support for the DC and the PCI is one of the most important electoral changes in Italian politics in recent years.

The paper focuses on the decline in electoral support for both the DC and PCI for several reasons. First, the decline in electoral support for both parties represents an anomaly since in most other western democracies when a governing party loses support, most of it goes to the main opposition party. Second, both the DC and PCI are examined together since the

electoral support of one party is derived, in part, on the existence of the other party. Specifically, the DC has benefitted from an anti-communist vote since the PCI has been the main opposition party, while the PCI has gathered some support from voters opposed to the DC regime.

1. The Purpose of the Thesis

The primary objective of this thesis is to explain the decrease in electoral support for Italy's two largest parties at the aggregate level.[3] The central question in this thesis is the following: What principal factors contributed to the electoral decline of the DC and PCI in the last decade? The secondary goal of this paper is to better understand the change in magnitude and direction of the Italian party system.

Part two of this chapter provides election results for DC and PCI between 1972 and 1992, and part three provides a regional breakdown of each party's national vote. Part four discusses the importance of the thesis question. Part five examines several models that have been used to explain recent electoral changes in Italy. This section also integrates material concerning theories of electoral change in advanced industrial democracies. Part six outlines the thesis and part seven offers a chapter outline.

2. National and Regional Electoral Results

Table 1.1 shows election results from the 1972 national election to the 1992 national election. The table includes

1972 election results to contrast the electoral performances of the DC and PCI from 1972 onward. The 1992 election was unique because, for first time in post-war Italy, support for the DC fell below the 30 per cent mark and the PCI did not contest the election. The PCI dissolved itself in February 1991 and formed the Democratic Party of the Left (*Partito Democratico della Sinistra*-PDS). Hardline Communists opposed to the dissolution of the PCI founded Communist Refoundation (*Rifondazione Comunista*-RC) in May 1991. In the 1992 national election, the PDS obtained 16.1 per cent of the eligible votes cast, while the RC received 5.6 per cent. In Table 1.1, the 1992 figure for the PCI represents the combined vote of the PDS and the RC.

The table also includes regional election results, beginning with the 1975 regional elections. Regional election results are included in the table to provide more evidence of the decline of the DC and PCI and because regional elections in Italy are "regarded less as local events and more as indicators of party strength at the national level."[4]

The first signs of electoral volatility appeared in the 1975 regional elections when the DC fell to 35.3 per cent and the PCI dramatically increased its vote to 33.5 per cent and came within 1.8 per cent of the DC. With voters reacting to the possibility of a PCI *sorpasso* (PCI surpassing the DC in voter support) in the 1976 national election, the DC increased its vote to approximately 38 per cent, a level of support

which it maintained until the 1983 general election. Nonetheless, the DC's increase in the 1976 election came at the expense of its minor coalition partners.

Table 1.1

Election Results of the DC and PCI in National and Regional Elections (1972-1992)

Percentage of valid votes cast

	1972	1975*	1976	1979	1980*	1983	1985*	1987	1990*	1992
DC	38.7	35.3	38.7	38.3	36.8	32.9	35.0	34.3	33.4	29.7
PCI	27.2	33.5	34.4	30.4	31.5	29.9	30.2	26.6	24.0	21.7
DC+ PCI	65.9	68.8	73.1	68.7	68.3	62.8	65.2	60.9	57.4	51.4

*denotes regional elections. Election results without an asterisk are for the Chamber of Deputies.

Sources: Judith Chubb, "The Christian Democratic Party: Reviving or Surviving?", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 1, eds. R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1986), p. 70.

Mark Donovan, "A Party System in Transformation: The April 1992 Election," West European Politics, 15:4 (Oct. 1992), p. 171.

Paolo Natale, "Lega Lombarda e Insediamento Territoriale: un' Analisi Ecologica", in La Lega Lombarda, ed. Renato Mannheimer (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991), p. 86.

The DC did recuperate slightly from its poor showing in the 1983 elections by improving its electoral standing in the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, by 1992 the DC had lost almost a quarter of the support it had received two decades earlier, revealing a significant decrease in the DC vote.

Like the DC, the PCI (now PDS-RC) has experienced a gradual erosion of its electoral support. For the first time in the post-war period, the PCI lost votes at the national level in the

1979 election. In fact, since 1976 the PCI/PDS-RC has lost more than a third of its support with its greatest electoral losses occurring between 1987 and 1992. The decrease in electoral support for the DC and PCI represents a general decline in support for Italy's traditional political parties (ones in existence since 1945) and suggests a transformation of the party system.[5]

3. The Regional Breakdown of the National Vote

This section is included in the chapter because national election results often conceal significant regional variations in voter support.[6] For instance, Table 1.1 indicates that the DC obtained 38.7 per cent support in both the 1972 and 1976 national elections. However, does this imply that the level of support for the party remained the same in all regions of the country? Although the DC maintained its 1972 level of voter support, as Table 1.2 shows, its showing in the 1976 election did vary in each of the five geo-political zones of Italy.

Table 1.2 also shows that the decline in support for both parties was not uniform. In the case of the DC, the party's largest losses between 1972 and 1992 occurred in the northern areas of the country (north-west and north-east Italy). On the other hand, the DC's electoral losses in the Centre and South were relatively small. The continued strong showing of the DC in the Centre and South decelerated its electoral decline at the national level.

Like the DC, the PCI's electoral fall has not been uniform.

Table 1.2
A Regional[7] Breakdown of Results for the DC and PCI in National Elections (1972-1992)

Percentage of valid votes cast

	North-West[8]		North-East[9] (white zone)		North-Centre[10] (red zone)	
	DC	PCI	DC	PCI	DC	PCI
1972	35.1	28.0	50.2	16.2	31.1	40.5
1976	35.2	36.2	48.3	23.5	31.8	45.9
1979	33.3	32.0	45.8	21.3	30.6	44.3
1983	27.4	31.4	39.7	20.8	26.1	44.6
1987	28.2	26.9	36.9	16.4	27.1	41.5
1992	21.0	19.2	29.4	12.7	22.8	37.2

	Centre (Lazio)		South[11]	
	DC	PCI	DC	PCI
1972	34.4	27.2	41.1	23.7
1976	35.7	36.0	41.2	31.4
1979	36.5	30.2	42.9	25.5
1983	30.9	29.6	37.3	24.8
1987	34.4	25.9	39.7	22.5
1992	31.0	23.7	39.3	17.6

Sources: Howard Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), pp. 353-67; Howard Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), pp. 312-18; Howard Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls, 1983 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 194-203; Corriere della Sera, April 8, 1992, pp. 16-7.

Between 1972 and 1992, the PCI incurred its heaviest losses in the North-west, North-east and South, but in the red zone the party has declined slightly. The strength of the PCI (now PDS/RC) in the red zone has retarded the rapid electoral decline of the party at the national level. Finally, except for the 1983 election when the PCI increased its share of the vote in the red zone, since the 1976 election, the PCI's electoral support steadily fell in all five geo-political areas of Italy.

4. The Importance of the Thesis

A study of the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI is significant for two reasons. First, the decrease in electoral support for the two parties could lead to a change in the composition of governments in Italy. Second, it has compelled both parties to transform themselves and is generally indicative of the changes occurring in the Italian party system. However, before a thorough discussion of these points, it is essential to address arguments that downplay the importance of this phenomenon.

The decline in the combined DC-PCI vote may not appear to be significant for some students of electoral change because similar declines have occurred in other countries without altering the nature and functioning of the party system. For instance, in Britain, the combined Labour and Conservative vote roughly averaged 90 per cent between 1945 and 1970, but between 1974 and 1987 it only averaged 75 per cent. However, the decline in the aggregate share of the vote did not translate into a proportional loss of seats for both parties. This phenomenon could be attributed to Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system, which handsomely rewards the two largest parties.[12]

In contrast, Italy, until recently, had a system of proportional representation and a decrease of twenty per cent in voter support roughly translated into a loss of twenty per cent of the seats in the Italian Chamber of Deputies (Italy's lower house). In other words, the decline in the combined vote of the

DC and PCI is significant because it could not only affect the composition of government, but the government could become more heterogeneous and fragmented. If this trend continues, it could result in other parties forming governments based on new coalition patterns (ones that exclude the DC). However, if new coalition patterns are not found, ungovernability is likely. This is more or less what has occurred after the 1992 election. The lack of a stable coalition pattern has provided much of the impetus for the reform of Italy's electoral system.

An examination of the electoral decline of the DC and the PCI is also warranted because the decrease in electoral support for the PCI contributed to the dissolution of the PCI and the formation of the PDS and the electoral decline of the DC is currently compelling the DC to dissolve itself and form a new political force. In essence, the electoral decline of Italy's two largest parties has resulted in their transformation. The transformation of the DC and the PCI is indicative of the general transformation of the Italian party system, in which the traditional parties are losing support to newly formed political movements. This trend may encourage new voter alignments and the reform of Italy's institutions.

5. Electoral Change in Italy

Three basic models have been formulated to explain voting behaviour or electoral change in Italy. One of the earliest models suggested that Italian voting behaviour (which includes electoral change) at the aggregate level was affected by

structural (socioeconomic and demographic) variables.[13] In other words, electoral change is the result of socioeconomic and demographic changes. This model is essentially a class-based model of voting which is used to explain voting behaviour in other advanced industrial democracies. According to the class model of voting, the working class generally supports parties of the left or socialist parties, while middle and upper class voters support parties of the right or conservative parties.

One of the most important electoral changes in advanced industrial democracies has been the decline in the significance of the class cleavage. Some attribute this phenomenon to the *embourgeoisement* of the working class.[14] In other words, the working class grew more affluent and, in doing so, began to adopt middle class values. Accordingly, there was less conflict between the working and middle classes. In contrast, other theorists contend that growing occupational mobility in advanced industrial societies, which shifted from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy and from an industrial economy to a service economy, reduced the importance of class politics. Due to these economic changes in the advanced industrial democracies, there were fewer people employed in agriculture and industry, but more workers employed in the service sector.[15]

While Italy has undergone a rapid transition from an agrarian to a post-industrial economy, the class model of voting does not adequately explain voting behaviour in a country where religious and perhaps regional cleavages are more important. For

instance, the PCI is strongest in the anti-clerical red zone of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria and Marche where small enterprises, artisans, sharecroppers and landless labourers are commonly found, rather than in the industrial triangle of Milan, Turin and Genoa. This example suggests that voting behaviour may be shaped not only by economic factors, but by regional and historical factors. (See Chapter Two, p. 28.) Despite the limitations of this model, it will be examined to determine how pertinent it is to the central thesis question.

In response to the structural model, a group of Italian scholars devised another model of voting behaviour, called the subcultural paradigm.[16] They contended that electoral behaviour was shaped by Italy's Catholic and Communist subcultures, into which most Italians were socialized until the 1970s. Many Italians voted according to their identification with one of the two dominant subcultures. According to the subcultural model, voting is merely an act which reaffirms an individual's subcultural identity.

The term "subculture" in the Italian context has both an ideological and a social component. Some scholars contend that the ideological component is the most important aspect of a subculture.[17] The ideological component of a subculture refers to a subculture's core set of values. This core set of values also includes a political allegiance, which is transmitted from generation to generation by primary groups such as the family through the process of socialization.[18]

In contrast, other scholars contend that the social component is more important than the ideological one. The social component of a subculture usually refers to the bond between an individual and the organizational structure or social network of a subculture. According to this definition of a subculture, political allegiance is largely the product of one's involvement in the social network of a subculture.[19] While both interpretations of a subculture are valid, it is important to remember that both interpretations maintain that political subcultures affect political loyalties. In addition, both interpretations contend that the strength and permanence of the Catholic and Communist subcultures contributed to the relative electoral stability of Italy until the mid-1970s.

Both Catholic and Communist subcultures attempted to integrate voters into their respective subcultures through a set of organizations and social networks. These networks include sporting clubs, farm groups, youth groups, women's groups, unions, newspapers, pubs etc... and they sought to protect subcultural members from the influence of other subcultures. In other words, the subcultural networks tried to segregate subcultural members from the rest of society and prevent them from interacting with individuals or groups outside the subculture.[20]

The subcultural model is in fact similar to the community integration thesis, which is used to explain electoral change in advanced industrial democracies. This model is similar to the

Italian subcultural model since in Italy, the "community" often refers to a subculture. In the areas where the Catholic and Communist subcultures are the strongest, certain communities are dominated by one subculture. Often, newcomers to these areas integrate into the dominant subculture because they want to conform to the customs of the community. According to the community integration model, voting behaviour is influenced by a homogeneous community setting (family, friends, neighbours and colleagues from work). Like the subcultural model, people vote on the basis of their degree of integration into a homogeneous community. However, urbanization and social mobility have weakened community homogeneity, thereby rendering communities more heterogeneous. This has made it more difficult for a community to mobilize support for the dominant party. This thesis predicts that with fewer voters taking their cues from the community, electoral instability will ensue.[21]

Both the Catholic and Communist subcultures provided the core support for the DC and PCI through their extensive organizational networks. However, growing consumer affluence in the post-war period brought about the secularization (which involves declining regular church attendance, the Roman Catholic Church's reluctance to become involved in Italian political life, and the prevalence of secular views among the population), and modernization (urbanization, mass culture, mass communications and rising levels of social and geographical mobility) of Italian society. It also led to the expansion of

the education system, resulting in a more politically sophisticated electorate[22]. Secularization, modernization and the expansion of education produced a change in the culture and values of Italian society (a move from collective ideologies to an ideology of personal and material advancement[23]) and weakened the Catholic and Communist subcultures, which may have led to a decline in support for the DC and PCI.[24]

The expansion of the education system in Italy parallels the colossal growth of secondary and post-secondary education in other advanced industrial democracies. This development produced more politically sophisticated voters, who based their voting decisions on the issues and the candidates' positions rather than on the political positions of their churches, families, communities, work colleagues, trade unions etc...[25]

Finally, a shift in Italy from collective values to individual ones has some parallels to Ronald Inglehart's model of value change, which involves a shift from materialist to postmaterialist values among the citizens of advanced industrial democracies. Materialist values include a concern with economic well-being, law and order, and external security, while postmaterialist values stress the importance of quality of life issues such as environmentalism, human rights, gender equality and the new morality. The unprecedented level of economic affluence and the absence of a major world war resulted in the spread of postmaterialist values. Inglehart suggests that the old politics of the working class (old left) versus the middle

class (old right) could be replaced by a new politics of postmaterialism (new left) versus materialism (new right).[26]

A variant of the subculture thesis was developed by Arturo Parisi and Gianfranco Pasquino.[27] These authors ascribed electoral volatility to changes in the type of votes being cast. According to the authors, there are three types of votes. First, the *voto di appartenenza* (vote of belonging) is defined as a vote which is based on an identification with a particular subculture. Since each subculture has systematic links to a political party, *appartenenza* voters are attached to a political party through their subculture.[28] Of all three votes, the *appartenenza* vote is considered to be the most stable.[29]

Second, the *voto di opinione* (vote of opinion) describes voters who support a party on the basis of its programme, policies and leadership.[30] In other words, voters base their decision on the conditions surrounding an election. Unlike *appartenenza* voters, most opinion voters are linked to a political party through the mass media.[31] In addition, the vote of opinion is the least stable of all three types of votes.[32]

Third, the *voto di scambio* (vote of exchange) is a form of clientelistic voting, which entails that voters support the party or politician that provides material benefits (jobs, contracts, pensions, subsidies and housing). Like the vote of opinion, this vote is also unstable.

According to the authors, there was a decline in the use of

the vote of belonging and a subsequent increase in the use of the votes of exchange and opinion since the mid-1970s. Exchange votes became more prevalent among the voters of the PCI and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) because both parties controlled the municipal councils of many large Italian cities beginning in the mid-1970s and, in the 1980s, the PSI returned to national government with a bigger share of the patronage network. Pasquino and Parisi argued that the decline in the vote of belonging involved weaker party loyalties and created more opinion voters. This development made it more difficult for the DC and PCI to hold on to its loyal supporters, but, at the same time, afforded both parties an opportunity to capture the support of a growing number of opinion voters.

A third model that is used to explain electoral change centres on political strategies. In particular, some analysts have attributed the electoral decline of the DC and PCI to the political strategies that both parties adopted in the 1970s and 1980s. The DC's reliance on negative factors (anti-communism, defence of Catholicism) during election campaigns, and its inability to reform itself and shed its corrupt image, began to negatively affect the DC's support in the 1980s.[33] The DC's internal reforms (which included a promise to end clientelism) were greeted by scepticism in northern Italy where it continued to lose support. In southern Italy, which is more clientelistic than the North, the move cost the DC votes in 1983.[34]

The PCI, on the other hand, followed political strategies

such as the "Historic Compromise" and the "democratic alternative", but these strategies did not enhance the PCI's credibility as an alternative to the ruling DC. In fact, some writers have suggested in hindsight that both strategies hurt the PCI's image as a reformist party among radical and moderate reformist voters.[35]

Lastly, one political factor, namely, the resolution of the communist question (the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the end to the Cold War) contributed to the electoral decline of both parties.[36] First, despite the PCI's attempts to distance itself from Soviet communism, the collapse of communism contributed to a decrease in the PCI/PDS's share of the popular vote. It revealed that the communist vision was for most Italians no longer viable and unpalatable. The decline of communism also hurt the DC because it received the bulk of the anti-communist vote. The ruling DC often used the "Communist menace" to divert attention from its endless factionalism, corrupt practices, *malgoverno* (poor administration of government) and clientelistic politics. However, with communism no longer an issue, Italians had an opportunity to examine the government record and policies of the DC without the threat of a communist alternative. The inability of the DC to replace its anti-communist vote with another source of support revealed the party's organizational weakness.

In short, there are generally two broad approaches to the study of electoral change in Italy, and the electoral decline of

the DC and PCI in particular. The first approach examines societal trends, which includes structural changes and the erosion of the Catholic and Communist subcultures. The second approach involves political factors, such as party strategy and the fall of communism.

6. The Thesis

The thesis of this paper is as follows: political factors primarily and directly contributed to the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI, while societal factors played a secondary and indirect role. Political factors include each party's strategy during the 1970s and 1980s as well as an examination of the resolution of the communist question and its effects on the electoral support of both parties. Societal changes include changes in the socioeconomic and demographic structure and the weakening of the Catholic and Communist subcultures. Although societal changes do not completely account for the electoral decline of the DC and PCI, they do provide the background to each party's strategy since the mid-1970s. In addition, societal factors weakened both subcultures, which allowed voters to be shaped by political factors.

I place more emphasis on political factors than on societal ones because an explanation of the electoral fall of the DC and PCI based solely on societal considerations is overly deterministic and diminishes the role played by parties and leaders in the entire political process. As one scholar stated, "parties are not simply passive recipients of pressure from

their socioeconomic, cultural, institutional and competitive environment."[37] This environment does not imprison political parties, but is actually shape by them. In brief, the DC and PCI through their strategies are partially responsible for their own decline.

The idea that party leaders and the parties themselves are responsible for their own electoral fortunes is derived from a model developed by Frank L. Wilson.[38] Wilson constructed a model of party transformation, in which he defined "party transformation" as a metamorphosis in the very essence of a party. Wilson argued that changes in the socioeconomic setting, political culture, political institutions and the competitive situation indirectly affect party transformation. The effect all four sources have on party transformation is governed by party leadership and strategy, which act as intervening variables.[39] Although this paper deals primarily with an explanation of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI and briefly touches on the transformation of the two parties, Wilson's emphasis upon party leadership and strategy is valuable to the study of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. Changes in the political culture and socioeconomic setting created opportunities and imposed constraints on the DC and PCI. However, given these opportunities and constraints, the thesis will argue that political factors best explain the electoral decline of the DC and PCI.

Although the primary focus of the paper is the electoral

decline of the DC and PCI, it also aims to examine the recent changes in the party system. An examination of the Italian party system is important because it defines and shapes party strategies; in turn, these party choices have consequences for the Italian party system.

7. Chapter Outline

The second chapter provides the appropriate background for later chapters. It includes a description and analysis of the Italian party system and the political subcultures, which are essential to understanding the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures, and, in turn, the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. In addition, the chapter includes a summary of the origins and early history, ideology, factions and sources of support of both parties.

Chapter three examines structural changes and the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures to explain the erosion in electoral support for the DC and PCI. Structural changes are first analyzed. These changes provide a mainly ineffective and incomplete explanation of the electoral decline of both parties. Next, the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures is examined. While the decline of both subcultures provides a more effective explanation, it is also incomplete.

Chapter four investigates political factors and their impact on the decline of the DC and PCI. This analysis involves an investigation of the crisis and collapse of communism and its effect on both parties. In addition, a study of party strategy

demonstrates that each party's political strategy adversely affected its electoral strength.

Chapter five examines changing aspects of the Italian party system such as the increase in party fragmentation, the decline in support for the traditional political parties and the rise of new political movements, such as the *Lega Nord* (Northern League-LN) and the *Rete* (the Network). An analysis of the dramatic rise of the LN reveals that divisions between the state and civil society and between the North and South are becoming more salient in Italian political system.

The final chapter summarizes the findings and discusses their significance for the Italian party system in general. A synopsis of the key political developments since the April 1992 national election is offered. Lastly, a prognosis on the electoral fortunes of the DC and the PDS is provided.

Endnotes

1. Martin J. Bull and James L. Newell, "Italian Politics and the 1992 Elections: From `Stable Instability' to Instability and Change," Parliamentary Affairs, 46:2 (April 1993), p. 205.

2. Ibid.

3. Studies of electoral change must distinguish between changes in electoral behaviour at the aggregate or macro-level and changes at the individual or micro-level. For most of the post-war period, electoral changes at the aggregate level have been relatively stable, which accounts for the gradual changes in the parties' electoral support. Nonetheless, voter stability at the macro-level disguises significantly high levels of voter volatility at the individual level. Italian political scientists have found that at the individual level there are quite high levels of voter volatility, which do not translate into significant changes at the aggregate level because they tend to negate one another. Hence, it is possible to have electoral stability at the aggregate level and

voter fluidity at the individual level.

Rosa Mule, "Electoral Behaviour in Italy," European Journal of Political Research, 23:4 (June 1993), p. 410; David Hine, Governing Italy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 90-1; Percy Allum and Renato Mannheimer, "Chapter 11: Italy", in Electoral Change in Western Democracies, eds. Ivor Crewe and David Denver (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 287-88; 290-293.3.

4. Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi, "The 1985 Local Government Elections", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 1, eds. R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1986), p. 11.

5. Renato Mannheimer, "La Crisi del Consenso per i Partiti Tradizionali", in R. Mannheimer, ed. **La Lega Lombarda** (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991), pp. 14-5.

6. Giacomo Sani, "Italian Voters, 1976-1979", in Italy at the Polls, 1979, ed. Howard Penniman (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), p. 46.

7. There is no consensus about the geo-political division of Italy for electoral purposes. Some divide Italy into North (North-Centre which includes Lazio) and South (which begins with Abruzzi). See Mario Caciagli, "Quante Italie? Persistenza e Trasformazione Delle Culture Subnazionali," Polis, 3 (1988), pp. 429-58. In contrast, others divide Italy into four or five zones. See V. Capecchi et al., Il Comportamento Elettorale in Italia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968), p. 75.

8. P.A. Allum, Italy- Republic without Government? (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 19. The north-west or the industrial triangle includes Piedmont, Liguria and the provinces of Milan and Pavia from the region of Lombardy.

9. North-east Italy or the white zone consists of the regions of Trento-Alto Adige, Veneto, Fruili-Venezia Giulia and the provinces Como, Varese, Bergamo, Brescia and Sondrio from the region of Lombardy.

10. North-Centre Italy consists of the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Marche, Umbria and the provinces of Cremona and Mantova from Lombardy, and Rieti from Lazio.

11. The South consists of the regions of Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia.

12. David Butler, British General Elections since 1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), 5-41.

13. Alberto Spreafico and Joseph LaPalombara, Elezioni e Comportamento Politico (Milano: Comunita, 1963); Mule, p. 407.

14. J. Goldthorpe et al., The Affluent Worker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

15. Russell J. Dalton, Scott C. Flanagan and Paul Allen Beck, eds., Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 16.

16. V. Cappecchi et al., Il Comportamento Elettorale in Italia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968).

17. Giorgio Galli, Il Bipartitismo Imperfetto: Comunisti e Democristiani in Italia (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1966), p. 250.

18. Ibid.

19. Alessandro Pizzorno, "Introduzione allo Studio delle Partecipazione Politica," Quaderni di Sociologia, 15 (1966), pp. 273-5.

20. David Kertzer, Communists and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 248-9.

21. Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, pp. 17-8.

22. Dalton, Flanagan and Beck, pp. 18-9; Giacomo Sani, "The Italian Electorate in the Mid-1970s: Beyond Tradition?" in Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976, ed. Howard Penniman (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), p. 121.

23. Stephen Gundle, "On the Brink of Decline? The PCI and the Italian Elections of June 1987," The Journal of Communist Studies, 3:4 (Dec. 1987), p. 162.

24. David Hine, "Italy: Parties and Party Government under Pressure", in Political Parties : Electoral Change and Structural Response, ed. Alan Ware (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), p. 77.

25. Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, pp. 18-9.

26. Ibid., pp. 19-22.

27. Arturo Parisi and Gianfranco Pasquino, "Changes in Italian Electoral Behaviour: The Relationships Between Parties and Voters," West European Politics, 2:3 (Oct. 1979), pp. 6-30.

28. Allum and Mannheimer, p. 304; Parisi and Pasquino, pp. 14-6.

29. Allum and Mannheimer, p. 304.

30. Ibid.

31. Parisi and Pasquino, pp. 14-5.

32. Allum and Mannheimer, p. 304.

33. Robert Leonardi and Douglas Wertman, Italian Christian Democracy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 185-6.

34. Judith Chubb, "The Christian Democratic Party: Reviving or Surviving?" in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 1, eds. R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1986), pp. 76-79.

35. Stephen Hellman, "Italian Communism in Crisis", in The Socialist Register, ed. Ralph Miliband (London: The Merlin Press, 1988), pp. 248-251; Peter Lange, "Crisis and Consent, Change and Compromise: Dilemmas of Italian Communism in the 1970s", in Italy in Transition, eds. Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd.), p. 122; Donald Sassoon, "The 1987 Elections and the PCI", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 3, eds. R. Leonardi and P. Corbetta (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989), p. 144.

36. The communist question is in some ways related to the consolidation of democracy in Italy, a major issue in Italian politics until the early 1980s. Since that time, improving the democratic system (curbing corruption and clientelism, institutional and electoral reforms, and making government more accountable, efficient and responsive) rather than defending democracy from anti-democratic forces has become the dominant issue in Italian politics.

37. Frank L. Wilson, "Sources of Party Transformation: The Case of France", in West European Party Systems, ed. Peter H. Merkl (New York: The Free Press, 1980), p. 528.

38. Ibid., pp. 526-28.

39. Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DC AND PCI IN THE ITALIAN PARTY SYSTEM

The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with the necessary background to understand the decline in electoral support for the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (now the Democratic Party of the Left-PDS). This chapter will provide a description and brief analysis of the Italian party system, which is partly rooted in the historical subcultures of the country. A brief introduction to Italy's subcultures is useful because some observers of Italian politics have hypothesized that the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI/PDS is the result of the weakening of the Catholic and Communist subcultures respectively. The last part of the chapter is devoted to the examination of both parties' origins and early history, ideology, factionalism and support.

The Origins of the Italian Party System, 1945-

Mussolini's Fascist regime weakened and discredited most social organizations (except the Church), interest groups, the state, the bureaucracy, the monarchy and the army. When the regime collapsed in 1943, it created a political vacuum, which was quickly filled by the political parties. They gained firm control of the political system, in particular the state, and

used it to obtain support from voters.[1]

Profound penetration of the state apparatus by the governing political parties is known as *partitocrazia*. *Partitocrazia* defines a situation in which the governing parties not only control state resources, but permeate the activities of public life in general.[2] *Partitocrazia* contributes to the politicization of the state and the parcelling out (*lottizzazione*) of top posts in state agencies among the governing parties on a proportional basis.[3] In particular, faithful party supporters are appointed to these top posts and they use the large patronage network (*sottogoverno*) to allocate material benefits to voters strictly on a partisan basis. This is done to create a patron-client network which provides the parties with a source of votes and funds at election time.[4]

Features of the Italian Party System

There are three main features of the post-war Italian party system. First, Italy has a large number of parties represented in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. As Table 2.1 shows, nine to eleven parties were represented in the Chamber of Deputies between 1948 and 1976. From 1979 election onward, at least 12 parties have gained representation in the lower house. The 16 parties currently in the lower house equals the number of parties in the 1946 Constituent Assembly. Table 2.1 shows that the Italian party system is very fragmented and this has been exacerbated by Italy's use of the proportional

representation (PR) electoral system.

Table 2.1
The Number of Parties with Seats
In the Chamber of Deputies, 1946-1992

1946	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968	1972	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992
16	**11**	**9**	**11**	**10**	**9**	**9**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**16**

Source: Elections Since 1945: A Worldwide Reference Compendium (Chicago: St. James Press, 1989), p. 180.
Note: The 1946 figure represents the number of parties with seats in the Constituent Assembly.

While the high degree of fragmentation suggests that Italy has a multiparty system in terms of the number of parties that are represented in the Italian lower house, Italian political scholars disagree about whether the Italian party system functions like a multiparty system.[5]

Second, the Italian party system is characterized by the presence of two major parties, the DC and PCI/PDS, and a host of smaller parties. The combined share of the vote for the DC and PCI has averaged between 60 and 70 per cent, except for the 1948, 1976 and 1992 national elections. Despite governmental instability, the underlying pattern of the Italian party system (the continued dominance of the DC and PCI), remained relatively unchanged until the early 1990s.[6]

The smaller parties may be divided into several groups as follows:

-parties of the democratic centre: Italian Liberal Party (PLI), Italian Republican Party (PRI), Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI) and Italian Socialist Party (PSI) since 1963

-new political parties of the left in existence since

1968: the Radical party (PRad), Greens, *Rete* (Network), Proletarian Democracy (DP) and a whole host of leftist parties that were founded by those who split from the PCI or PSI

-new populist parties such as the Northern League (LN)

-parties of the authoritarian right: Italian Social Movement (MSI), and the Monarchist Party

A third feature of the Italian party system is the ideological division of the party system into three voting blocs: right, left and centre. The share of the vote for each bloc has remained relatively stable for most of the post-war period.[7] The electoral stability of the ideological blocs is the result of a low degree of vote switching that occurs between blocs. Most vote switching occurs within the respective ideological areas.[8]

Moreover, the ideological division of the party system has contributed to a lack of alternation of parties in government.[9] Since 1948, the DC dominated centre has been in power because the prospect of a PCI-led leftist government was unacceptable to Italy's allies (especially the U.S.), the Church and the majority of Italian voters. The PCI was barred from government by the other parties because it supposedly was "undemocratic". Thus, the same centrist parties remained in power and any alternation of parties in government was not possible until anti-communism was no longer an issue.[10] Since there was no or little prospect of being removed from office, the governing parties had no incentive to govern competently or to be sensitive to the needs of Italian

citizens. As a result, governing parties became self-serving; immersed in their own power struggles, and grew out of touch with Italian society.

Geo-political Subcultures

Most scholars of Italian electoral behaviour attributed the stability of the Italian electorate to the longevity of various subcultures.[11] Different historical experiences in different regions of the country before and after Italian unification in 1870 divided Italy into distinct geo-political subcultures.[12] These zones are located in specific areas of the country and are politically homogeneous.[13] Most observers of Italian electoral behaviour assert that Italy has four broad regional subcultures: Catholic, Communist (also referred to as the Marxist or Socialist subculture), liberal (lay or secular) and clientelistic. The Catholic and Communist subcultures are the two most dominant subcultures.[14] Although this geo-political division of Italy oversimplifies complex regional voting patterns, this model does facilitate a study of electoral behaviour and political subcultures, and avoids the conventional tendency to divide Italy into North and South.

The Catholic subculture is strongest in north-east Italy, which is often called the "white zone". The "white zone" includes the regions of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Trento-Alto-Adige, and Veneto and the provinces of Como, Bergamo, Brescia, Sondrio and Varese from the region of Lombardy.[15] The

Catholic subculture is dominant in the "white zone" because it was the local Roman Catholic clergy that spearheaded and backed Italian unification when this region was a part of the Austrian Empire.[16] In addition, the local clergy also had close ties with small landholders, which was the prevalent class at that time.[17] Thus, Catholicism represented a positive force in this area of the country. This is reflected in the Church's strong influence in the area and the people's general support for Catholic associations and the Catholic party, the DC.[18] Before the DC came into existence, most members of the Catholic subculture supported the Italian Popular Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano*-PPI, the precursor to the DC).

The Communist subculture is strongest in the "red zone" of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, and the provinces of Cremona, Mantova, and Rieti.[19] Republican, anarcho-syndicalist and socialist movements with strong anticlerical proclivities developed in this part of the country because this zone was part of the Papal States before unification in 1870. The Papal States opposed Italian unification because the clergy believed that a united Italy would weaken the Church's temporal powers and lead to the spread of anti-clericalism. Since the Papal States opposed unification, unification was anti-clerical in nature. In addition, the Church supported large landowners against the peasant masses who were largely landless. Hence, the peasants were largely anti-clerical in

nature.

The "red zone" assumed a more Marxist posture in the late 19th century as tensions escalated between landlords and peasants and as the PSI, founded in 1892, made inroads in this area. During the Resistance, the Marxist culture became further entrenched since the Resistance was led primarily by the Communists.[20]

The liberal subculture is found in the north-west of Italy, specifically in the regions of Piedmont and Liguria and the provinces of Milan and Pavia. This area is also known as the "industrial triangle" of Milan, Turin and Genoa. In this zone, the DC and PCI receive more or less the same level of electoral support.[21] According to Giorgio Galli, this subculture was the product of the industrial revolution and represents Italy's national political culture.

Lastly, the clientelistic political tradition pervades most of Italy although it is more common in the South for historical and economic reasons.[22] In the South, politics was largely dominated by local notables rather than by political and trade union movements. Clienteles were previously organized around local notables because they essentially provided security and material goods for their clients and their families. In the 1950s, the DC used the state apparatus to transform the personal patron-client relationship into the "mass clientelism of the party bureaucracy". This primarily occurred because the DC attempted

to shift political loyalties of southerners from the local notables to the party, but this required extensive state patronage. Hence, the DC's use of the state apparatus reinforced clientelistic political behaviour in the South.[23]

Clientelism may also be more common in the South because unemployment is high and the state is the largest employer. In this zone, party organization is less established, voter allegiances less stable, and political relationships are based on the "vote of exchange" (patronage).[24] Despite challenges from the far right in the early 1950s and 1970s, the PCI in the late 1940s and mid-1970s and the PSI in the 1980s, the DC is the dominant party in most of the South. In general, voters tend to support governing parties or parties that are likely to be in government.[25]

The description above indicates that Italy has a broadly-based national political culture along side numerous regionally-based subcultures. The Catholic and Communist subcultures are the most important since they provided the DC and PCI with a fundamental base of support, which explained the dominance of the two parties in the post-war period.[26] However, both the DC and PCI could not have become national parties if their basis of support was strictly regional.[27]

A Summary of the DC and PCI

This section briefly summarizes the origins and early history, ideology, factionalism, and core sources of support of the DC and PCI. This will provide the appropriate

background for subsequent chapters regarding the electoral decline of both parties since the late 1970s.

Italian Christian Democracy (DC)

Origins and Early History

The DC was founded in 1943 by veterans of the pre-Fascist PPI. The DC's first leader, Alcide De Gasperi, outlined the party's programmatic line to be Christian, interclass, centrist and socially progressive. The DC quickly became the dominant party of the centre and government after the Second World War because the PLI, which dominated Italian politics between 1870 and 1919, was discredited by the rise of Fascism in the early 1920s.[28] Furthermore, many viewed the DC as a primary line of defence against the PCI. Lastly, De Gasperi relied heavily upon the Roman Catholic Church and its affiliated associations, big business, local notables, and U.S. support to obtain votes, build the party and increase its membership.

In July 1953, the DC replaced De Gasperi as party secretary with Amintore Fanfani, a move which symbolized a shift from idealism towards pragmatism.[29] Fanfani attempted to construct a party organization that was independent of the Church, big business, local notables, and the U.S. by expanding state intervention, especially in the South. In particular, the DC used the public administration, local and national public agencies, state-owned industries and banks to forge patron-client relationships with voters. Hence, by the

mid-1950s, the DC increasingly became identified as a party that was associated with the state apparatus, whose resources were used to maintain the party in office. Nevertheless, the development of patronage-client relationships on a mass scale coupled with the control of local party sections by party bosses led to the proliferation and institutionalization of factions within the DC.[30]

The DC's hegemony first began to show signs of erosion when it lost a Church-sponsored 1974 referendum to repeal the 1970 divorce law. A year later the DC suffered a setback in regional elections. These events compelled faction leaders to revitalize the DC under Benigno Zaccagnini, who became party secretary in 1976. Zaccagnini wanted to clean up the DC's corrupt image and return the party to its founding principles.

Ideology

There is an ongoing debate among Italian political scholars about the ideological nature of the DC. Some scholars contend that the DC is a "regime party", while others argue that the party is a "catch-all" or brokerage party.[31] Some portray the DC as a "regime party" because of its perennial association with the state. The DC has used the state apparatus to aggregate different interests and establish enduring links with numerous organizations through patron-client networks. Since the DC appeals to a wide variety of interests, it could be considered a "catch-all" party. However, it is unlike most standard "catch-all" parties

because it uses the state to attract the support of interest groups.[33]

The DC is also considered a "catch-all" party because it wants to maintain power by appealing to as many interests as possible. In particular, to stay in power the DC had to allow capital to develop a free market, but at the same time maintain social peace with labour. To prevent labour from crystallizing around the PCI, the DC introduced many welfare reforms and intervened in the economy regularly. The DC's steady control over the state and public sector does not reflect any ideology on its part, but a reality: the presence of a strong opposition party that could not be allowed to form the government. Hence, the DC cannot be classified as a conservative or Catholic party because it is essentially a catch-all party. The advantage of both arguments is that they do not define the DC in terms of who supports the party, but in terms of its policies and actions.[34]

In addition, due to the catch-all party status of the DC and its willingness to use the state apparatus, the party's policies and programs tend to be amorphous and ambiguous.[35] The ideological ambiguity of the DC is reflected in its mishmash of policies. The DC still maintains ties with conservative institutions like the Church and recently has focused on issues such as the family and traditional morality. On the other hand, the party has permitted the expansion of women's rights and weakened the Church's influence over

religious instruction in public schools. On the economic front, DC-led coalition governments have expanded the public sector economy and favoured state intervention in the private sector. However, since the mid-1980s the DC has followed a more neo-conservative economic policy that included holding the line on inflation and cutting social payments. Until recently, the DC was reluctant to spearhead a privatization programme of Italy's huge public sector since this would probably dismantle the clientele network which helped the DC secure political power.[36] In short, the party's ideological ambiguity has allowed its leaders a tremendous amount of flexibility.

Factions

Except when De Gasperi was party secretary, the party has been controlled by faction leaders. The party secretary is usually selected when some sort of consensus is reached among faction leaders. Factionalism is an important feature of the Italian party system, and is especially acute within the Christian Democratic party and other parties in government. Factions, in the Italian context, are usually formed by party members who want to control the ideological direction of a party or by those who want a greater share of the spoils. Factions were originally due to ideological rivalries within the party, but today most are the result of power struggles among party leaders over the allocation of patronage.[37] Evidence of this trend can be discerned by examining Giulio

Andreotti's *Primavera* faction. In the 1950s this faction began on the far right, but by the 1970s it had moved to the left. Most factions are geographically based and created when party notables gain control of a large provincial federation. Most factions have their own organization, finances, supporters, territorial bases and are linked to certain interest groups.[38]

Basis of Support

The DC has a broad basis of electoral support that cuts across all social classes.[39] Table 2.2 shows that the DC received electoral support from all social classes in 1978. In fact, this holds true for most Italian political parties. In addition, Table 2.2 shows that most of the DC's support comes from rural farm workers, farmers, employers and homemakers.

Table 2.2
Social Class and Voting Preference of Italians
(in percentages)

	PCI	PSI	PSDI	PRI	DC	PLI	MSI
Farm Workers	21%	21%		1%	48%	3%	1%
Farmers	19	15		-	54	3	1
Employers & Sm. Business	2	19	4	7	44	3	4
Wh. Collar workers	22	22	5	7	30	3	4
Ind. workers	45	19	2	3	25	-	1
Homemakers	24	5	14	2	49	2	3

Source: Adapted from Paolo Farneti, The Italian Party System (1945-1980), (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 98. (All figures are for 1978 except for 1968 figures for farmers and farm workers. In 1968, the PSI and PSDI were combined in a single party.)

The DC is strongest in the "white zone" and in the South due to the Catholic subculture and clientelistic subculture respectively. The DC's electoral support is based on four key factors: Catholicism, clientelism, anti-Communism and centrism.[40] Catholicism is the most important source of support for the DC and anti-communism is the second most important. Catholicism is important to the DC because most of its leaders are recruited from Catholic organizations.[41] Party leaders like Moro and Andreotti have been recruited in Catholic associations such as Catholic Action (AC) or the Catholic University Students' Federation (FUCI). Catholic associations also cultivated leaders and forged links with workers through the Association of Italian Christian Workers (ACLI) and the Italian Confederation of Trade Union Workers (CISL), created by Catholics after the union split of July 1948.[42] Furthermore, the DC obtained support from Catholic farmers through the Confederation of Small Farmers (*Coldiretti*).

Moreover, the DC receives a majority of its support from practising Catholics (those who attend mass regularly). For instance, a 1988 survey found that practising Catholics made up half of the DC's support.[43] The large share of practising Catholics who support the DC is the characteristic that distinguishes the DC from other parties. Until the 1970s, there was a complex, reciprocal affiliation between the Church, Catholic associations and the DC. However,

secularization and modernization weakened the ties between the DC, the Church and the Catholic associations.

A second pillar of Christian Democratic electoral support is clientelism.[44] As previously mentioned, this practice began in the mid-1950s when the DC consolidated its hold on power. However, the DC's hegemony over the *sottogoverno* began to weaken in the mid-1970s when it lost control over regional and municipal governments. This spilled over into the national arena in the 1980s when one of the conditions for the PSI's entry into government involved a larger share of the *sottogoverno*.[45] Nonetheless, the DC still controlled a major portion of the patronage network in the late 1980s.[46]

The third main feature of electoral support for the DC is anti-communism. Despite its scandal-ridden image, the DC was perceived by most Italian voters as the only party that could effectively prevent the PCI from coming to power. Most post-war elections in Italy have been depicted by the DC as a struggle between God (DC) and Satan (PCI). The Cold War allowed the DC to use the "Red scare" as its electoral trump card. Nevertheless, the PCI's ideological moderation and its control of regional and local governments weakened the effectiveness of anti-communism in the 1980s.

A fourth source of support for the DC is its location in the centre of the political spectrum, which contains the largest share of Italian voters (roughly 31 per cent).[47] Since 1945, the DC has occupied this position and attempted to

maintain it by acting as a broker in Italian society. The DC's centrism also encompasses anti-extremism (anti-communism and anti-fascism). Surveys between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s found that the DC acquired a significant majority of the voters who reject the MSI and PCI.[48]

The Italian Communist Party (PCI)

Origins and Early History

The PCI was founded in 1921 by Amadeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci after a split with the PSI at the Livorno Congress.[49] Mussolini came to power in 1922 and by 1926 the PCI and other non-Fascist parties were officially banned. Between 1926 and 1943, the PCI operated as an underground, clandestine organization which suited its oligarchical party structure.[50]

After the fall of Mussolini, the PCI realized that its revolutionary strategy was inappropriate for Italy's circumstances. Revolution was not possible in Italy because it was occupied by the British and Americans, was predominantly Catholic, and was very tired of dictatorial rule. In addition, the Soviets considered Italy part of the American sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the PCI was still committed to its goal of a communist society. At a party meeting in Salerno in March 1944, party secretary Palmiro Togliatti declared that the PCI would not bring about a communist society in Italy by using parliamentary means (winning power through the ballot box) rather than fomenting an armed insurrection. Since this

strategy marked a radical departure from its prewar revolutionary strategy, it became known as the *Svolta di Salerno* (the turning point of Salerno). This event placed the PCI on the road towards social democracy and compelled it to follow an interclass strategy (add to its working class support by acquiring support from the progressive middle class), which resulted in the moderation of its ideology.[51] Between 1944 and 1947, the PCI served in the national unity governments. However, due to pressure from the U.S. and the Vatican, the PCI was removed from government and relegated to the opposition, which hindered the social democratization of the party.[52] By 1948, the PCI became the dominant party on the left and Italy's second largest party because of its leading role in the Resistance, and splits within the PSI.[53]

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the twentieth Soviet party congress in 1956 paved the way for the "national road to socialism". Togliatti once again proposed that the PCI take the parliamentary path to socialism, which became known as the *via italiana al socialismo* ("The Italian way to socialism"). By the late 1960s, the PCI was heavily criticized by the far-left (extra-parliamentary) left since the party avoided any strong critique of the free market. On the social front, the PCI was outdone by the PSI and the secular parties which introduced legislation on divorce.[54]

In the 1970s, the PCI spearheaded the Eurocommunist movement and advocated the strategy of the "Historic

Compromise", which entailed a grand coalition of the PCI and DC. In the 1975 administrative elections, the party obtained 33.5 per cent of the vote and gained control of the municipal councils of most large Italian cities, such as Rome and Turin. In the 1976 national election, the PCI garnered the highest level of support in its history (34.4 per cent), which provided an impetus for its entry into government.

Ideology

Although the PCI began as a Marxist-Leninist party, it gradually distanced itself from the Soviet model of Communism. The PCI leadership realized that the Soviet Communism was inappropriate for the exigencies of Italian society. Thus, the PCI was compelled to develop an indigenous brand of Communism. As previously stated, the PCI had abandoned the revolutionary practices of Marxism-Leninism, but there had been some ambiguity concerning its abandonment of Marxist-Leninist goals.

Togliatti's "Italian way to socialism" abandoned Leninist tactics, but held to the Leninist notion of socialist transformation. Furthermore, Togliatti maintained the Leninist tradition by using the writings of Antonio Gramsci, one of the PCI's most important theoreticians, to refashion Italian Communism.[55]

By the 1970s, liberal-democratic beliefs were shaping the thinking of the leadership and membership of the PCI.[56] With the development of Eurocommunism, the PCI not only rejected

Soviet Communism but critically attacked it. The PCI maintained that the U.S.S.R. had violated the freedoms of its citizens and that its social and economic policies were a failure. This diatribe seemed to signify that the PCI had abandoned its Leninist legacy.

If the party was no longer Leninist, then where did its ideological identity lie? In 1978, the party staked out its ideological position with the obscure "third way", a middle position between Marxism-Leninism and Western social democracy. As the name suggests, it was touted to be an alternative to capitalism and communism. The goals of the "third way" generally corresponded to European social democracy, but they were usually conveyed in crypto Marxist-Leninist terminology, which rendered the PCI's ideology baffling. Despite its ideological obscurity, the PCI was very pragmatic. It accepted and supported Italy's membership in NATO and the EC. It favoured a mixed economy and supported austerity measures, deficit reduction and wage restraint in the mid-1970s. In addition, the PCI took a prudent stance on social matters. Generally, under Party Secretary Enrico Berlinguer the party accelerated the pace of social democratization.

Factions

Despite the PCI's formal ban on factions, "unofficial" factions or ideological tendencies existed in the party from the 1960s on. Most scholars on the PCI argue that the party

had four factions, three of which are now a part of the PDS.[57] A right-wing social democratic faction, originally led by Giorgio Amendola and later by Giorgio Napolitano, was known as the *miglioristi, laboristi* or *riformisti* faction. This faction advocated an eventual union with the PSI and the formation of a sole party of the left akin to the British Labour Party. It also favoured improving capitalism, working with the lay secular parties, and placed a premium on governing.

The centrist faction was usually led by and named after the party secretary. This faction was the most pragmatic and always sought to reconcile the differences between the left and right wings of the party. This usually resulted in vague and ambiguous party strategies.

The left-wing faction, primarily associated with Pietro Ingrao, wanted to see the PCI enter into alliances with progressive Catholics and radical social movements. Unlike the other two factions, the Ingrao faction advocated a radical critique of capitalism. The faction also wanted to maintain the party's communist identity and emphasizes radical reform and social mobilization over governing.

Finally, there was a pro-Soviet faction led by Armando Cossuta which wanted to safeguard the PCI's communist heritage. This faction split from the PCI to form the Communist Refoundation (RC) in 1991.

Basis of Support

The PCI is strongest in the "red zone", but also has support among blue collar workers in the industrial triangle. Like the DC, it obtained support from all social classes (See Table 2.2). The PCI encouraged the development of mass organizations to recruit party members, shape public opinion and garner votes. Two of the most important Communist affiliated associations are the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) and the National League of Cooperatives (LNC). The CGIL was important in obtaining and maintaining the backing of workers, while LNC furnished the party with the money it made selling goods to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a description and analysis of the Italian party system. It found that the party system was fragmented, but dominated by two parties between 1948 and 1992. The study also discovered that Italy, for most of the post-war era, was governed by a *partitocrazia* which consisted primarily of the centrist parties. Coalitions were dominated by centrist parties because the Italian party system was divided into three ideological blocs, where left and right wing parties made unacceptable coalition partners. In particular, they remained in power because the main opposition party was the PCI, which could not come to power during the Cold War and in a country closely allied to the U.S. Equally

important, the study unveiled that the party system is partially rooted in regional subcultures.

Lastly, a description and an analysis of both parties' early history and origins, ideology, factionalism and sources of support was provided. The DC is a catch-all party that has utilized the state to carve out a clientele network of support. However, its years in power tainted the party with corruption and stifled its reform. In contrast, the PCI has moderated its ideological stance and embraced social democracy by dissolving itself and forming the PDS.

Chapter Three examines the socioeconomic and demographic changes that occurred in Italy in the post-war era to determine their effect on the electoral support for the DC and PCI. Moreover, the chapter examines whether the weakening of Catholic and Communist subcultures contributed to the electoral decline of the DC and PCI.

Endnotes

1. David Hine, Governing Italy: The Politics of Bargained Pluralism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 68; David Hine, "Italy: Parties and Party Government under Pressure", in Political Parties: Electoral Change and Structural Response, ed. Alan Ware (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 72, 74.

2. Geoffrey Pridham, The Nature of the Italian Party System (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 4.

3. Hine, Governing, p. 68; Martin J. Bull and James L. Newell, "Italian Politics and the 1992 Elections: From "Stable Instability" to Instability and Change," Parliamentary Affairs, 46:2 (April 1993), p. 204.

4. Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser, Italy: A Difficult Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 4-6.

5. Giovanni Sartori believes that the Italian party system represents an extreme form of a multiparty system called "polarized pluralism". It has five essential characteristics: (a) the system has five important parties; (b) no single party obtains an absolute majority; (c) it is characterized by a left, right and centre pole; (d) there is a high degree of polarization between left and right; (e)extreme parties benefit at the expense of centre parties. Giorgio Galli, on the other hand, argues that the Italian party system operates more like a two-party system because of the electoral dominance of the DC and PCI. However, this two-party system is imperfect because there is no alternation of power between the two major parties. In other words, the DC is always in power, while the PCI is permanently in opposition. Hence, Galli characterizes the Italian party system as an "imperfect two-party system". Lastly, Paolo Farneti maintains that the Italian party system operates on the principle of "centripetal pluralism", which involves the movement of anti-system parties towards the centre of the political spectrum. This development, in fact, strengthens the centre.

See Giovanni Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism", in Political Parties and Political Development, eds. J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Giorgio Galli, Il Bipartitismo Imperfetto (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1966); Paolo Farneti, The Italian Party System (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1985).

6. Hine, Governing, p. 84.

7. Mark Donovan, "Party Strategy and Centre Domination in Italy," West European Politics, 12:4 (Oct. 1989), pp. 115-6; Guido Martinotti, "Electoral Trends in Italy: The Cycle 1970-1985," West European Politics, 9:2 (Apr. 1986), p. 260.

8. Hine, Governing, p. 91; Percy Allum and Renato Mannheimer, "Italy", in Electoral Change in Western Democracies, eds. I. Crewe and D. Denver (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 298-99.

9. Hine, Governing, p. 69; Bull and Newell, p. 205.

10. Ibid.

11. Rosa Mule, "Electoral Behaviour in Italy," European Journal of Political Research, 23:4 (June 1993), p. 408.

12. Joseph LaPalombara, Democracy: Italian Style (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 303; Percy Allum, Italy: Republic Without Government (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 40; Mule, p. 408.

13. Mule, pp. 408-9.

14. Farneti, p. 61.

15. Allum, p. 19.

16. Allum, p. 42.

17. David Kertzer, Comrades and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 261.

18. Mule, p. 408.

19. Allum, p. 19.

20. Allum, pp. 42-3.

21. Hine, Governing, p. 82.

22. Allum, p. 39; Raphael Zariski, Italy: The Politics of Uneven Development (Hinsdale, Ill: The Dryden Press, 1972), p. 108.

23. Mule, p. 408; Judith Chubb, Patronage, Power, and Poverty in Southern Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 55-7, 72-7.

24. Hine, Governing, pp. 82-3; Farneti, p. 79.

25. Donovan, p. 124.

26. Farneti, p. 67; Hine, Governing, p. 82.

27. Hine, Governing, p. 82.

28. Ibid., p. 84.

29. Spotts and Wieser, pp. 20-4.

30. Ibid., pp. 24-5.

31. G. Grant Amyot, "Italy: The Long Twilight of the DC Regime", in Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies, ed. Steven B. Wolinetz (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 35; Donald Sassoon, Contemporary Italy: Politics, Economy and Society since 1945 (New York: Longman Group Ltd.,1986), p. 225.

33. Amyot, p. 35.

34. Sassoon, p. 225.

35. John Clarke Adams and Paolo Barile, The Government of Republican Italy, Third Ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), p. 155.

36. Frank L. Wilson, European Politics Today (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 1990), p. 352.

37. Adams and Barile, p. 155.

38. Spotts and Wieser, p. 29.

39. Wilson, p. 327

40. Spotts and Wieser, p. 34; Robert Leonardi and Douglas Wertman, Italian Christian Democracy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 173-185.

It is interesting to note that Spotts and Wieser feel that Catholicism, anti-Communism and clientelism are the three most important sources of electoral support for the DC, while Leonardi and Wertman believe that Catholicism, anti-communism and centrism are the three most important sources of support.

41. Leonardi and Wertman, p. 193.

42. In Italy, there are three unions which are associated with certain political parties. Besides the Catholic dominated CISL, there is the Union of Italian Labour (UIL) which is affiliated with the Socialists and Republicans, while the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) is affiliated with the PCI and PSI. The division of trade union movement reflects the fragmentation of political culture in Italian society. However, since 1970, all three unions are much more loosely affiliated with the various political parties mentioned.

43. Leonardi and Wertman, p. 176.

44. Gianfranco Pasquino, "Italian Christian Democracy: A Party for All Seasons?" West European Politics, 2:3 (Oct. 1979), pp. 94-5.

45. Spotts and Wieser, pp. 35-7.

46. Leonardi and Wertman, p. 185.

47. Leonardi and Wertman, p. 183.

48. Ibid., pp. 183-4.

49. Cris Shore, Italian Communism: The Escape from Leninism (Concord, M.A.: Pluto Press, 1990), p. 29.

50. Zariski, pp. 157-8.

51. Miriam Golden, Labor Divided: Austerity and Working Class Politics in Contemporary Italy (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 25.

52. Spotts and Wieser, p. 42; Golden, p. 25.

53. Hine, Governing, p. 84.

54. Spotts and Wieser, p. 44.

55. Ibid., p. 58.

56. Wilson, p. 354.

57. Philip Daniels, "The Democratic Party of the Left and the 1992 Italian General Election," The Journal of Communist Studies, 8:3 (Sept. 1992), p. 130.

CHAPTER THREE: CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE DECLINE OF THE CATHOLIC AND COMMUNIST SUBCULTURES

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that the structural model (changes in the socioeconomic and demographic structure) and the subcultural model provide indirect and incomplete explanations of the decline in voter support for the DC and PCI. While these changes weakened voters' attachments to the DC and PCI, which resulted in fewer *appartenenza* voters and more opinion voters, they did not necessarily contribute to the electoral decline of the DC and PCI because both parties had an opportunity to garner the support of opinion voters.[1] While both models do not adequately explain electoral change, they provide the context in which both parties operated since the late 1970s and allow political factors to have a greater effect upon the level of electoral support for both parties.[2]

This chapter first indicates the structural changes in post-war Italy and then proceeds to demonstrate that these changes do not adequately explain the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. Next, an examination of the decline of the two subcultures is provided. While this explanation is more useful, it is still incomplete.

Structural Changes

The most important socioeconomic change in post-war Italy was the transition from an agrarian economy to a post-industrial one. After World War Two, Italy was primarily an agricultural country. In 1951, 42 per cent of the labour force was employed in agriculture[3], but by 1988, only 10 per cent was employed in this sector, primarily in the South.[4] In this period, employment in the industrial sector increased to 44 per cent in 1970, but declined to 30 per cent in 1988.[5] In contrast, service sector employment has increased since the 1970s.[6] These socioeconomic changes resulted in fewer farmers and industrial workers, a decline in the share of the petty bourgeoisie (the self-employed middle class) from 44 per cent of the labour force in 1944 to 32 per cent in 1985, and an increase in the number of salaried white collar workers.

Some social structuralists have suggested that these economic changes adversely affected voter support for the DC and PCI. First, they argued that the decline in the size of the petty bourgeoisie, which overwhelmingly supports the DC[7], weakened the party's electoral support.[8] Furthermore, an increase in the percentage of salaried white collar workers (the new middle class) was detrimental to the DC and benefitted the parties of the left because of unionization and

the diffusion of post-materialist values among the post-war cohorts.[9] In addition, they argued that the increase and the subsequent decrease in the size of the industrial working class led to first an increase and then a decrease in voter support for the PCI.

There were also several demographic changes. First, youth became a salient voting factor in the mid-1970s when the voting age for the Chamber of Deputies was lowered from 21 to 18 years of age. This change in the franchise was more important in Italy than in other Western democracies because of its relatively high voter turnout. The entry of the these young voters, who were socialized during a period of rapid secularization (the late 1960s and early 1970s), benefitted the left, especially the PCI.[10]

Second, in the 1970s there was an increase in the number of women who voted for the left. In 1968, 67 per cent of women supported the DC, but by 1978, this fell to 47 per cent. This twenty per cent decrease went to the parties of the left, which increased their share of the women's vote from 27 to 47 per cent. Some have attributed this swing to the left to an increase in the number of working women in recent years, which accelerated secularization.[11] This trend is felt to have hurt the DC because it is supported by more women than men.[12]

In addition, Italy became more urbanized in the post-war era with a mass exodus from the country to the city. Most of

the migration was from the rural South to the cities of the industrial triangle and from the regions adjacent to Lazio to the capital Rome. Substantial migration occurred between 1955 and 1963, and then decelerated in the mid-1960s, but recommenced solidly between 1967 and 1971. Altogether roughly nine million Italians were involved in inter-regional migration.[13] The share of the population living in communities with less than 10,000 people decreased from 44 per cent in 1953 to 35 per cent in 1987; those living in mid-sized communities (between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants) increased from 31 per cent to 36 per cent in the same period. Lastly, the portion of the population living in communities with more than 100,000 people increased from 25 per cent to 29 per cent between 1953 and 1987.[14] Urbanization is important because most students of electoral behaviour contend that urban voters are more likely to support leftist parties. Hence, urbanization appears to have benefitted the PCI and adversely affected the DC, which is stronger in rural areas.[15]

Furthermore, there were changes in social conventions, such as a rapid decline in weekly church attendance. In 1956, 69 per cent of the adult population attended church weekly, but by May 1988, this figure had fallen to 27 per cent, evidence of the rapid secularization of Italian society.[16] Social structuralists contend that the shrinking proportion of regularly practising Catholics has adversely affected the electoral support of the DC, a party whose single most

important source of support is religion.[17]

Lastly, although there was an increase in the share of the unionized labour force from 27 per cent to 44 per cent between 1960 and 1980, by 1985 the portion of unionized workers fell to 36 per cent and seemed on the decline.[18] Unionization rates fell due to the restructuring of northern industry, weakening the working class and reducing the power of the trade unions.[19] Conventional wisdom suggests that unionization rates affect the level of electoral support for the left. Hence, in the case of Italy some believe that unionization rates affected the level of electoral support for the PCI.[20]

An Examination of Structural Changes

Some observers of aggregate electoral behaviour have contended that structural changes lead to electoral change, and in the case of this paper, contributed to the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI.[21] Although these changes did affect the political strategies of both parties, they did not directly contribute to the decline of the DC and PCI.

First, many of the structural changes occurred between the late 1950s and late 1960s, but a significant erosion in electoral support for the DC and PCI did not occur until the 1980s.[22] Second, a socioeconomic approach is flawed because objective class voting (based on either education, income or occupation) is less prevalent in Italy than in other West

European states.[23] Table 3.1 shows that both the DC and PCI are supported by a wide variety of occupational groups and social classes.

Table 3.1
Social Composition of the Electorates of the DC and PCI (in percentages)

Social Strata	DC		PCI	
	1953	1978	1953	1978
1. Self-employed*				
(a) Big business		1		1
(b) Farmers		12		5
(c) Shopkeepers		6		5
Subtotal	26	19	6	11
2. Dependent Labour				
(a)White-collar		10		11
(c)Blue-collar		13		35
Subtotal	21	23	68	46
3. Non-Active population				
(a)Homemakers		32		23
(b)Pensioners		23		15
(C)Students		3		5
Subtotal	53	58	26	43
	100	100	100	100

Source: Paolo Farneti, Italian Party System (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1985), pp. 92-3.
*Figures were extrapolated from a 1974 survey.

Table 3.1 indicates that the decline in the number of self-employed did affect the composition of the DC and possibly its electoral support, but the DC mitigated this loss by garnering the support of pensioners and homemakers. Pensioners may be attracted to the DC because the party used the state apparatus to give generous pensions to voters,

especially to public sector workers and southerners. Furthermore, homemakers tend to support the DC because they are more religious than men.[24]

The DC also mitigated the effects that the decline in the size of the petty bourgeoisie had on its electoral support by garnering the support of white collar workers. Although Inglehart and others believe that white collar workers form the basis of left-libertarian social movements, this is not the case in Italy because white collar workers in the public sector engage in clientelistic politics.[25] This is important because public sector white collar employees are the largest category of white collar workers.[26] Public sector workers usually obtain their positions through the patronage network, which is largely in the hands of the DC. Hence, many public employees support the DC since it gave them employment.

Furthermore, the broadly based composition of the PCI's electorate also mitigated the effects that the decline in the size of the working class had on the PCI's electoral support. Table 3.1 shows that 35 per cent of the PCI's support comes from the working class. However, this does not imply that the PCI is strictly a working class party like the French Communist Party or the Portuguese Communist Party. The PCI successfully forged links with white collar workers, artisans and small businesses, especially in the "red zone". To categorize the PCI as a working class party is reductionist because it defines the party in terms of who supports the

party, rather than by its actions and policies, and ignores the two-thirds who are not blue collar.[27]

As mentioned previously, some attributed the decline of the DC and PCI to demographic changes. However, there are two problems with this assessment. First, these changes are better explained by secularization and modernization, processes which are eroding the Catholic and Communist subcultures. Next, demographic trends do not invariably benefit one party and hurt another.[28]

First, young people who voted in the 1970s disproportionately supported the left (more than 60%) because they were socialized during a period of rapid secularization.[29] Secularization also had an especially strong radicalizing effect on young women as well. Before the 1970s, women voted disproportionately for the DC because most women were closely attached to the Church. Hence, the decline in the degree of religiosity, rather than gender, was important in explaining the radicalization of young women.[30] This discussion demonstrates that structural variables like age and gender are closely tied to the generational changes such as secularization.

Moreover, secularization (with most of it occurring between the late 1950s and mid-1970s[31]) has slowed down. Between 1976 and 1988, the share of the population that attends church regularly was between 27 and 31 per cent.[32] Furthermore, a 1985 study found that those between 18 and 24

years of age were no less religious than their predecessors and those who attended church regularly were inclined to support the DC. These trends suggest that the secularization process may have bottomed out.[33]

Second, many demographic trends are likely to hurt both parties, while some may help them. First, the Italian population is ageing due to increasing life expectancy and a falling birth rate.[34] The ageing of the Italian population may benefit the DC because life cycle effects seem to benefit the DC.[35] With older voters composing a larger share of the electorate in the future, the DC is likely to benefit. In addition, young voters who disproportionately supported the left and PCI in the 1970s were less supportive of the PCI in the 1980s and 1990s. The DC's support among youth appears to have stabilized during this period, which represents a reversal from the 1970s. Lastly, the rate of urbanization decelerated in the late 1970s and 1980s. In reality, the population of Italy's ten largest cities fell by 6.6 per cent between 1971 and 1986, whereas mid-sized communities increased.[36] This may be a positive development for the DC because 40 per cent of its supporters came from these mid-sized communities. In contrast, this development may have hurt the PCI which is stronger in the large urban centres.[37]
The decline in regular church attendance is an important factor because it explains the change in the composition of the DC's electorate. Nonetheless, this factor is better

explained by secularization.

Similarly, the decline in trade unionism affected the composition of the PCI's electorate, but this variable is vital to understanding the decline of the Communist subculture. The Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) was important in integrating part of the working class into the Communist subculture. Hence, a study of trade unionism within the context of the decline of the Communist subculture will better explain the PCI's electoral decline.

This discussion demonstrated that structural factors provided an indirect and incomplete explanation of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. However, this examination is important because it gives the context in which both parties have operated since the late 1970s. It also eliminated a possible line of explanation and prompted an analysis of other factors, such as the decline of the subcultures. In short, the structural approach was not very useful because it assumes that electoral changes are strictly affected by socioeconomic factors rather than by political ones.[38]

The Decline of the Subcultures

The goal of this section is to show that while the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures gives a more effective explanation of the decrease in voter support for the DC and PCI, it is nevertheless incomplete.[39] In particular, this section explains that both subcultures have diminished in importance and size. However, both the Catholic and Communist

subcultures still have strong ties with their core members. It also outlines criteria to determine membership in a subculture and measures the degree of subcultural integration. Evidence of the erosion of both subcultures and reasons for their decline are presented. Next, the relationship between the decline of the subcultures and the erosion in electoral support is examined. Finally, the problems associated with the subcultural approach are investigated.

Indicators of Membership in a Subculture

Several indicators have been employed to identify a member of a subculture. A member of the Catholic subculture could be discerned by examining the following indicators:

(a) The frequency of Church attendance
(b) Membership in Catholic organizations
(c) Feelings of sympathy or hostility towards the Church
(d) Identification with the Catholic World.[40]

The frequency of Church attendance not only gauges the degree of integration into the Catholic subculture, but also indicates one's psychological attachment to it.[41] Similarly, several indicators have been employed to measure one's attachment to the Communist subculture. They are as follows:

(a) Membership in a leftist union
(b) Identification with the working class
(c) Feelings of sympathy or hostility towards the General Confederation of Italian Labour (CGIL)
(d) Feelings of sympathy or hostility towards the U.S.S.R.

Evidence of the Decline of the Subcultures

The decline in the strength of the Catholic subculture is

apparent when one examines church attendance figures. As Table 3.2 shows, regular church attendance has drastically declined since the mid-1950s when it was roughly 70 per cent. By the mid-1970s, church attendance had dropped near the 30 per cent mark. With fewer practising Catholics, the Church and its affiliated organizations had less influence over voters. In addition, figures show that there was a decline in the membership of Catholic organizations, which have been inspired and sponsored by the Church.

Table 3.2
Church Attendance
(percentage of the adult population)

1956	**69%**
1961	**53%**
1968	**48%**
1972	**36%**
1976	**31%**
1980	**29%**
1985	**29%**
1987	**31%**

Source: Robert Leonardi and Douglas Wertman, Italian Christian Democracy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 177.

For example, Catholic Action (AC), the official lay organization of the Church, saw its membership fall from a high of 3 million in the mid-1950s to roughly a half-million in the mid-1980s. Likewise, the membership of the Italian Christian Workers' Association (ACLI) declined from a million in the mid-1960s to 538,000 in 1988. There also was a noticeable decline in the membership of *Coldiretti* from 1.9 million families in 1967 to approximately 1 million families

in 1986.[42]

Furthermore, the Italian public is less sympathetic towards the clergy than in the past. In 1968, the mean sympathy score for the clergy on a scale of 1 to 100 was 58, but by 1981 it fell to 47.[43] Moreover, Italians' opposition to the Church's involvement in politics grew from 54 per cent in 1958 to 67 per cent in 1984. In fact, more than a majority of weekly churchgoers feel that the Church should not intervene in domestic politics.[44] In short, evidence concerning the decline of the Catholic subculture indicates that church attendance is down and that practising Catholics, who disproportionately support the DC, are less politicized.

Although not as tangible, there is evidence of a deterioration of the Communist subculture. First, there was a decline in unionization in the 1980s.[45] The decline in unionization occurred in heavy industries which eliminated thousands of jobs. It was in these industries that the PCI-affiliated CGIL had most of its members. The CGIL traditionally used its organization to deliver blue collar votes to the PCI. However, the decline in unionization reduced this pool of potential PCI supporters.

Moreover, the CGIL's organizational presence was weakest in the public sector, one of the fastest growing areas of Italy's post-war economy. The public sector is dominated by non-left unions, such as the Union of Italian Labour (UIL) and the Italian Confederation of Trade Union Workers (CISL).

Lastly, in 1987, 30 per cent of union members were pensioners up from 15 per cent a decade earlier.[46] This figure is problematic for the PCI because it means that fewer young workers are becoming unionized, thereby making it difficult to revitalize an already flagging Communist subculture.

In addition, PCI voters are currently less sympathetic about the CGIL than in the past. In 1968, 46.8 per cent of PCI voters were very sympathetic about the CGIL, but by 1985 it fell to 20.9 per cent.[47] Similarly, there was a decline in the proportion of PCI voters who were very sympathetic of the ex-U.S.S.R. In 1968, 30 per cent of PCI voters were very sympathetic of the Soviet Union, but by 1985, this figure was below 15 per cent.[48]

Table 3.3
Strength of Party Attachments, 1981-1989
(as a percentage)

	1981	Nov. 1988	Apr. 1989	Nov. 1989
Very Close	20.2	15.3	14.2	11.6
Fairly Close	28.4	26.1	23.4	23.2
Sympathizer	48.9	32.4	27.9	28.9
Not Close to any party	2.5	26.2	34.3	36.3

Sources: Eurobarometer 16 (October 1981), pp. 55-9; Eurobarometer 30 (Oct.-Nov. 1988), pp. 745-47; Eurobarometer 31 (March-Apr. 1989), pp. 350-59; Eurobarometer 32 (Nov. 1989), pp. 245; 650.
Note: Do not know (DK) responses were excluded from the tabulations. The questions asked in each survey were worded as follows: Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, do you feel yourself to be very close to this party, fairly close or merely a sympathizer?

In addition, the decline of both subcultures is

manifested in the decrease in the strength of party identification. Party identification is defined as an attitude of attachment or closeness to a party.[49] While party identification is different from the concept of *appartenenza*, it is still a reasonable indicator of the strength of a subculture since in Italy party identification is a by-product of belonging to a subculture.[50] Table 3.3 demonstrates that during the 1980s there was a sizeable decrease among those who feel very close and fairly close to a party, and among those who are merely sympathizers. In contrast, those who do not feel close to any party dramatically increased. Hence, it appears that voters' party attachments are weakening, which is an indication that the subcultures are in decline.

Finally, the decline of both subcultures manifested itself electorally as well. (See Table 1.2, p. 6.) First, support for the DC diminished in the white zone where the Church had a strong organizational presence. In fact, the DC is now strongest in the South where the Church is more influential and clientelistic politics is more prevalent. Moreover, the PCI/PDS-RC experienced a decline in electoral support in the red zone. The decline in support for the DC and PCI/PDS-RC reveals the organizational weaknesses of both subcultures.

Reasons for the Decline of the Subcultures

The economic modernization of Italy led to the diffusion of mass communications, increased social and geographical

mobility, growing consumer affluence and the secularization of society. Consequently, there was an erosion in the strength of the subcultures and a shift away from collectivism towards individualism.[51]

First, the expanded capabilities of mass communications led to the decline in the strength of the subcultures, which consisted of insular political communities. Previously, both subcultures were sheltered from outside sources of communication. This, along with the strength of primary groups (family, peer groups and school) and organizational networks (Church, unions and political parties) in the socialization process, fostered a sense of subcultural identity and strengthened internal solidarity within the membership, which guaranteed the permanence of *appartenenza* and the maintenance of the subcultures.[52] However, mass communications, especially television with its pluralist inclinations and its supply of competing ideas, penetrated the insulated subcultures and eroded their belief structure. Since the 1970s, the growth of private media has seriously challenged diminished the role played by subcultural organizations and primary groups in the socialization process. The decline of both subcultures also may be attributed to geographical and social mobility.[53] A 1988 census discovered that one-third of Italians live in a locality that is different from their birthplace. This process uprooted many people from a familiar environment in which their original partisan identity was

acquired (usually in the family) and subsequently reinforced through personal relations (friends, colleagues and relatives) and subcultural organizations.[54]

Lastly, the decline of the subcultures could be attributed to growing consumer affluence, leading to a change in values. The collective movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which emphasized the public good over private interests and were at the core of the Catholic and Communist subcultures, declined. In their place, voters increasingly espoused such values as individualism, materialism, success, and wealth in the 1980s.[55]

There are also particular reasons for the decline of the subcultures. First, the Catholic subculture declined in strength primarily as a result of secularization. Catholicism became irrelevant for more Italians. For instance, in 1972, 21 per cent of Italians felt that Catholicism was irrelevant to their lives and by 1980 this nearly doubled to 39 per cent.[56] Furthermore, a majority of Italians have taken secular positions on social matters like divorce and abortion. For example, in the 1974 divorce referendum, 59 per cent voted to keep the existing divorce law, while in the 1981 abortion referendum, 68 per cent voted to maintain the current abortion law. These events demonstrated that Catholicism was no longer the leading cultural force.[57]

The Catholic subculture declined in strength because the Church gradually moved away from direct involvement in Italian

politics. A split between conservatives, who favoured a strong Church presence in Italian politics, and liberals, who favoured a depoliticized Church, weakened the Church's influence over Italian society and reduced the Catholic subculture's willingness to support the DC. Under Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), the Church completely mobilized its resources in backing the DC against the PCI. In addition, Catholic organizations were ready to be mobilized by the Church during election campaigns. However, under the papacy of John XXIII (1958-63) and during the first decade of the papacy of Paul VI (1963-1978), the Church avoided any direct intervention in Italian politics. Since the mid-1970s, the Church has once again become involved in Italian politics, but in a more limited and less effective fashion than in the 1940s and 1950s.[58]

Divisions and weaknesses in Catholic organizations also led to a decline in the Catholic subculture. Between 1946 and 1958, the Catholic subculture and the Church gave their absolute support to the DC. By the late 1950s/early 1960s, the Catholic subculture's backing of the DC was dispassionate and more restricted. By the late 1960s/early 1970s, some Catholic organizations, in particular ACLI, CISL and AC, halted their support of the DC, criticized the party for its rampant factionalism and demanded that it reform itself. Despite the Church's renewed support for the DC in the 1976 and 1987 elections, most Catholic organizations have not openly

endorsed the DC. Only the *Coldiretti* and Communion and Liberation have openly backed the DC.[59] In short, a divided and weakened Catholic subculture, the divisions within the Church hierarchy and the secularization of society weakened the Church's influence on Italian voters.[60]

While secularization weakened the Catholic subculture, modernization eroded the base of the Communist subculture.[61] Growing consumer prosperity debunked the Communist myth that the working class could only progress in a Communist society.[62] The weakening of the trade union movement in the 1980s also eroded the Communist subculture. First, the FLM (the Metal workers union) was forced to sign an agreement to layoff 23,000 workers after a bitter 35 day strike at FIAT. This event was an omen for the whole labour movement as it ushered in an era of industrial restructuring in which thousands of industrial jobs were eliminated.[63] Second, the defeat of a PCI sponsored referendum to restore wage indexation in 1985 seriously divided the labour movement and hurt the Communist subculture. Both these events showed that the communist subculture was in a malaise.

The Decline of the Subcultures and Italian Voting Behaviour

The decline of both subcultures is related to a decline in the use of the vote of *appartenenza* and a simultaneous growth in opinion and exchange votes. The decline in the *appartenenza* vote implied that many voters were freed from their subcultural bonds and voted for parties for other

reasons (clientelism or an affinity for their policies). Although this argument seemed logical, it was largely untested until Renato Mannheimer and Giacomo Sani completed a study on both subcultures in 1985. This study demonstrated that the subcultures did not disappear but still influenced voting behaviour in Italy. Moreover, it found that both subcultures had slightly declined in size (share of voters who were part of the Catholic or Communist subculture) and strength (a decrease in the number of core members who strongly identify with the subculture's beliefs and an increase in peripheral members whose subcultural beliefs are tenuous) since the late 1960s.[64]

In particular, the study found that 26 per cent of the electorate belonged to the Catholic subculture and an equal share belongs to the Communist subculture. Furthermore, 8 per cent of the electorate belonged to both subcultures and 40 per cent belonged to neither subculture.[65] This last figure is important because, when compared to a 1968 study which found only one-third of the electorate did not belong to either subculture, it reveals that the non-subcultural group increased in absolute terms by seven per cent over 17 years.[66] Hence, the decline of both subcultures was gradual rather than rapid. In addition, 60 per cent of the DC's electoral support came from the Catholic subculture, while 67 per cent of the PCI's support was accounted for by the Communist subculture. These figures indicated that the

subcultures were still important to both parties and provided each party with a good-sized electoral base from which to build.

Moreover, the Mannheimer and Sani study seemed to suggest that while both the Catholic and Communist subcultures have not disappeared, both have slightly declined in size and strength. The decline in the size of the Catholic subculture is manifested in the sharp decrease in the percentage of Italians who regularly attend Church.

The decline of the Catholic subculture also entailed a decrease in the level of commitment to the ideas of the subculture among members. This phenomenon is evident by examining the percentage of practising Catholics who support the DC. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, between 70 and 75 per cent of practising Catholics voted for the DC, but from 1983 to 1988 between 57 and 65 per cent of practising Catholics supported the DC.[67] Specifically, the core members of the Catholic subculture (those who solidly identify with the ideas of the subculture) were more likely to vote for the DC than those on the periphery of the subculture (those who are moderately integrated in the subculture and are subjected to societal cross pressures).[68] In fact, 75 per cent of the core members supported the DC, while only 40 per cent of the peripheral members voted DC.[69]

The decline of the Communist subculture involved a decrease in the size and strength of the subculture. The

decline of the Communist subculture was more evident in peripheral members than in core members. For instance, 80 per cent of the core members of the Communist subculture voted for the PCI, while approximately 30 per cent of the peripheral members voted for the PCI.[70]

The Shortcomings of the Subcultural Model

While some maintain that the decline of both subcultures directly caused the electoral decline of the DC and PCI, this argument is difficult to corroborate quantitatively; but above all, it is incomplete and has some flaws. First, the decline in the size and strength of both subcultures did not necessarily translate into a direct loss of votes for the DC and PCI since both parties had a chance to respond to the decline of the subcultures by garnering support from other sectors of society.

For instance, the DC increased its share of the secular electorate to 33 per cent in 1988 from 15 per cent in 1968.[71] Although the shrinking supply of practising Catholics affected the DC's most important source of electoral support, the party replaced part of its religious electorate with a secular electorate.[72] In addition, the growing *meridionalizzazione* ("southernization") of the DC vote also mitigated the party's electoral losses. In other words, as Table 3.4 illustrates the southern share of the DC vote has increased in the last twenty years. For instance, in the 1972 national election, 32.7 per cent of the DC's support came from

the South, but in the 1992 election it reached 42.7 per cent.

Table 3.4
The Southern Share of the Total Vote of the DC, 1972-92
(as a percentage of the DC's total vote)

1972	32.7%
1976	33.5%
1979	35.1%
1983	36.7%
1987	37.4%
1992	42.7%

Sources: Howard Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), pp. 353-67; Howard Penniman, Italy at the Polls, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), pp. 311-18; Howard Penniman, ed., Italy at the Polls, 1983 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 194-201; Corriere della Sera, April 8, 1992, pp. 16-17.

Likewise, the PCI responded to the decline in the size of the Communist subculture (primarily due to a decline in industrial workers), by broadening its base of support in terms of social class (it attracted more support from the middle classes).[73] Hence, the party is less reliant on industrial workers than in the past, which has mitigated its electoral decline.

Second, the subcultural model only gives a partial description of the relationship between voters and parties.[74] In particular, it ignores other reasons that cause voters to support a party, such as clientelism, an affinity for the party's programme or how a party governs. For instance, in the red zone, shopkeepers and small businesses supported the PCI because it governed responsibly at the local

level and their support was rewarded with personal favours.[75] This example indicates that some voters base their party support on something other than subcultural identification.

Lastly, the Mannheimer and Sani study indicates that the subcultures were still important sources of electoral support for both political parties. In fact, their findings have been corroborated by a study carried out by Roberto Cartocci, who concluded that the *appartenenza* vote was still more widely used than the opinion vote.[76] Both the Mannheimer and Sani, and Cartocci studies definitely challenge and to an extent undermine the idea that the subcultures have declined rapidly.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that structural changes did not adequately explain the electoral decline of the DC and PCI because they were supported by a wide array of social classes and demographic groups. Moreover, demographic factors did not invariably benefit one party and hurt another over a period of time and it was difficult to predict with any degree of certainty how demographic changes will affect each party in the future. Lastly, some structural changes were more a function of secularization and modernization, two processes which are integral to explaining the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures.

On the other hand, a study of the decline of the subcultures showed that the two subcultures declined in terms

of size and strength. The decline of the subcultures, while a more useful explanation, did not directly lead to a decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI. However, it did weaken the loyalty of some *appartenenza* voters to their subculture, allowing them to be more affected by political factors. In short, despite the rapid economic, demographic and social changes in Italy between mid-1950s and mid-1970s, the hegemony of DC and PCI continued until the 1990s. Structural changes and the decline of the two largest subcultures did not lead directly to a decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI, but it affected the political environment in which both parties have operated since the late 1970s.

The weakened subcultures and the corresponding increase in opinion voting presented both parties with a changed electoral environment in the late 1970s, one that was essentially more competitive. Given the gradual decline of both subcultures, neither party could rely heavily upon them as sources of support. Both major parties attempted to adjust to the increased competition by attracting non-subcultural voters.[77]

It is precisely how the DC and PCI responded to their changing electoral environments that is the focus of the next chapter. In general, it is often the policy choices, electoral strategies and governmental performances of parties, and the reaction of voters to changes in the political system, that affect the electoral support of political parties.[78] The

strategies of the DC and PCI, and the resolution of the communist question, are two political reasons for the electoral decline of both parties.

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12. Ibid., p. 166.

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15. Ibid., p. 171.

16. Ibid., p. 177. Paul Ginsborg's figure for weekly church attendance in 1988 is 35 per cent. This figure may be higher than the one given by Leonardi and Wertman because the former included those fourteen years of age and older, while the latter did not. See Ginsborg, pp. 434; 453.

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37. Ibid., pp. 170; 191. According to 1981 census figures, the percentage of the Italian population living in communities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants was 62.3 per cent, while those living in communities with more than 50,000 inhabitants were 37.7.

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48. Ibid., pp. 173-5.
The decline in sympathy for the former U.S.S.R. may be an inappropriate measure of the degree of attachment to the Communist subculture today because this indicator has changed in meaning over time. It was an appropriate indicator thirty years ago, but since the 1970s when the PCI started to be more critical of the former U.S.S.R. and its brand of communism, this indicator changed in meaning for the PCI voter because the party changed its stance with respect to the former U.S.S.R.

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CHAPTER FOUR: POLITICAL FACTORS IN THE ELECTORAL DECLINE OF THE DC AND PCI

The previous chapter showed that structural changes and the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures provided indirect and incomplete accounts of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. In contrast, this chapter demonstrates that an analysis of political factors provides a more complete explanation of the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI. The electoral fall of both parties is primarily the result of political factors, such as the resolution of the communist question (the collapse of communism and the end to the Cold War and their effect on both parties), and the political strategies of both parties.

The Resolution of the Communist Question and the DC

The resolution of the communist question is important in understanding the electoral decline of the DC because the party was the main beneficiary of the anti-communist vote. Anti-communism was a key component of the DC's electoral appeal after the Second World War, because the Vatican and the U.S. viewed the DC as an anti-Communist bulwark that would ensure stability, and protect democratic institutions and freedoms.[1] In the last two decades, anti-communism seemed to be a major element in the DC's electoral support only when

there was a chance of a PCI *sorpasso* and/or when the question of Communist participation in government was raised. With the crisis and collapse of communism, anti-communism diminished in importance; hence, the DC lost voter support. The DC leadership failed to realize that the collapse of communism would not only adversely affect the PCI, but also their own party.

This section describes and analyzes the role of anti-communism in three elections (1976, 1983 and 1992) in order to demonstrate that anti-communism diminished in importance. These three elections were chosen because the degree of anti-communism varied in each of them. The 1976 election featured the strongest anti-communist campaign since the 1948 election. In the 1983 election, anti-communism began to diminish in importance, while in the 1992 election, anti-communism was not even a factor because the Cold War had ended and the PCI no longer existed. It is worth remembering that despite the decline of the Catholic subculture, its malgoverno, and corrupt image, the DC maintained its level of support at 38 per cent between the 1963 and 1979 elections. This was largely due to its anti-communist appeal.

The 1976 Election

In order to better understand the significance of anti-communism in the 1976 national election, it is necessary to set the context in which the election occurred. By the mid-1970s, there were signs that the DC was losing its hegemony in

the Italian political system. First, the DC lost a Church supported referendum to abolish the 1970 divorce law. Most observers of Italian politics interpreted the result as evidence of profound secularization in Italian society.[2] Second, in the 1975 regional elections, the DC vote fell to 35.3 per cent, while the PCI vote increased to 33.4 per cent. Hence, the margin between the two parties was only 1.9 per cent, which led many to believe that the PCI could surpass the DC in the next national election.[3]

During the 1976 election campaign, DC leaders adamantly opposed any sort of coalition government with the PCI. Then party secretary Amintore Fanfani attacked the PCI in order to entice right-wing voters away from the Italian Social Movement (MSI) to the DC. In fact, Fanfani called a vote for the MSI "a wasted vote."[4] The Church's condemnation of six dissident Catholics who ran for the PCI and the admonitions from the U.S. about a possible PCI government also intensified the anti-communist theme during the campaign.

Despite dire predictions that the DC would lose votes, the party maintained its 1972 level of support (38.7 per cent). The DC appeared to maintain its support by obtaining votes from the MSI, the Italian Liberal Party (PLI) and the Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI).[5] Thus, it appeared that some of the supporters of these parties voted for the DC on the grounds of anti-communism.

The 1983 Election

In the 1983 national election campaign, the DC, under Ciriaco De Mita, conducted a campaign that made the PSI, rather than the PCI, its main rival. This change in strategy occurred because the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), under Bettino Craxi, was becoming a more appealing alternative to the DC and PCI. The PSI benefitted from the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures and the trend towards values such as individualism and material progress in the 1980s, which it fully embraced and represented. This image of the PSI garnered support from the new middle classes (professionals, white collar workers and service sector employees).[6] In an attempt to isolate the PSI, De Mita employed the strategy of bipolarity, which meant that voters had a clear choice between the DC, which represented moderate groups in Italian society, and the PCI, which represented more radical forces. In doing so, De Mita implicitly acknowledged that a democratic alternation of power between the DC and the PCI was possible. Consequently, the DC's use of anti-communism was abandoned.[7] The DC also used the bipolar strategy because the DC ended the strategy of *confronto* (constructive dialogue with the PCI) and a weakened PCI abandoned the Historic Compromise and replaced it with the "democratic alternative".

The results of the 1983 campaign were a disaster for the DC, as its share of vote fell to 32.9 per cent. Most attributed the erosion in voter support for the DC to the

decline in the importance of anti-communism and to the party's negative public image, while the decline of the Catholic subculture and the crisis of clientelism were secondary factors in the DC's losses.[8]

Anti-communism was not an important factor in the 1983 election for several reasons. First, most polls forecast a substantial gap in electoral support between the DC and PCI and the threat of a PCI *sorpasso* was unlikely. Next, De Mita downplayed anti-communism, which prompted some secular centrist voters, who normally would have voted for the DC on anti-communist grounds, to support the small, secular parties of the centre including the PSI as they had done in the past.[9] Lastly, the pool of ardent anti-communists declined. For instance, those who rated the PCI at 20 or lower on a 100 point scale made up 43 per cent of the electorate in 1968, but only 34 per cent in 1985.[10] Hence, there were fewer anti-communists to mobilize and even if the DC tried to mobilize them, this might not have been successful since the disenchantment with the party among some centre and right-wing voters proved to be a stronger motivating factor than anti-communism.[11] Hence, some of them voted for the PRI, PLI and MSI, all of which made sizeable electoral gains. In fact, the DC's loss of 5.4 per cent roughly equals the sum of the gains made by the PRI, PLI and MSI.[12]

The 1992 Election

The 1992 election was humorously dubbed the "first free

election" in Italy's postwar history because it was the first election held in the post-Cold War period.[13] With the disappearance of the communist bogeyman, the DC's anti-communist appeal was rendered impotent.[14] Due to the collapse of communism, many voters who previously voted for the DC on anti-communist grounds were free to vote for other parties that more closely reflected their views or free to punish the DC for its *malgoverno*.[15] In short, the absence of anti-communism in this election undermined a vital source of electoral support for the DC.

The Collapse of Communism and its Effects on the PCI

The crisis and collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s partially explains the erosion in support for the PCI. The crisis of communism began in the West during the late 1970s, manifested in a growing distrust of the former Soviet Union and in the belief that communism was not an appropriate solution for the socio-economic problems of the West. This growing distrust of communism was due to the treatment of Soviet dissidents, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the introduction of martial law in Poland. In addition, once Gorbachev unveiled *glasnost*, the failure of the planned economy and the general malaise of the Soviet system became more readily known in the West and forced the left to reassess its views on the economy. The collapse of communism made it apparent that communism had failed and was ideologically

bankrupt.

Despite earning the trust of more Italians during the period of the Historic Compromise (1972-1980) and its historic *strappo* (break) with Soviet Communism in 1981, when it declared that the October Revolution of 1917 was a spent force, many Italians still distrusted the PCI in the 1980s. A poll conducted in the mid-1980s found that 39 per cent of the Italian electorate would never vote for the PCI, making it the second most distrusted party after the MSI.[16] The decision of the PCI (1985) to adopt the policy of "new internationalism", which re-established links with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), added to the public's distrust of the PCI's democratic credentials.[17] Many voters saw the PCI's decision as a deviation from its programme of political moderation and democratic legitimacy, which added to the voter's distrust of the party. The governing parties used the PCI's "new internationalism" to continue to isolate the PCI.[18] The policy of "new internationalism" was thrown into disarray when the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union collapsed.[19] Moreover, reports that the PCI still received funds from the CPSU during the 1980s added to the public's distrust.

The collapse of communism also hindered the PCI's appeal to youth during the 1980s. In the 1980s, youth showed a tendency to prefer single-issue groups and parties (e.g. The

Green Party) and eschew ideological movements. Hence, the PCI's ideological appeal in the 1980s was not enough to entice youth to join the party.[20] In fact, in 1977, more than 25 per cent of the PCI members were under the age of 30, but by 1988, this figure dropped to 7.2 per cent.[21] Interviews with young people discovered that most of them did not know about the PCI's history and associated the word "communist" with the failed communist regimes in Eastern Europe.[22]

The failure on the part of the PCI to attract young supporters not only reflects the party's growing unpopularity, but is also a function of the ineffectiveness of political parties in the socialization process. Ideas conveyed by the political parties are often contradicted by messages from the media and special interest groups.

In short, the resolution of the communist question partly explains the decline in electoral support for the PCI during the 1980s and early 1990s. Although the PCI played by the democratic rules of the game, it still maintained a very loose association with communism internationally. Many Italians viewed this tenuous link with extreme wariness and, in the end, they perceived the PCI to be linked to the discredited and failed communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The unwillingness of the PCI to abandon its communist heritage allowed its political opponents to continue to exclude it from government and prevented it from becoming a viable alternative to the DC regime.[23]

The Political Strategy of the DC: The Failure to Reform its Negative Public Image and its Reliance upon Negative Factors

This section aims to demonstrate that the failure of the DC to reform its negative public image contributed to its electoral decline.[24] Many Italians view the DC as a corrupt, divided and power-hungry party, which is in large part due to its institutionalized factionalism, *partitocrazia*, and *malgoverno*. The failure of the party to reform its negative image and offer voters a "new DC" forced the DC to rely on negative factors such as anti-communism and Catholicism for electoral support. (These are considered negative factors because they do not provide reasons for supporting the DC, but give reasons not to support other parties.)

The DC's negative public image first affected its national vote in the 1983 election, in which the anti-communist and Catholic components of its electorate diminished. In fact, the party's public image as a competent governing party began to rapidly deteriorate as early as the late 1960s. Surveys conducted between 1967 and 1976 revealed that the Italian electorate viewed the DC as the most dishonest, archaic and incompetent party.[25] A 1986 study found that if the DC went into opposition, 38 per cent of the electorate believed that corruption would decrease and 42 per cent felt that government would operate better.[26] These surveys thus highlighted growing public dissatisfaction with the DC's performance in government. However, this did not immediately lead to a decline in its electoral support because

the Catholic and anti-communist vote, especially the latter, mitigated the adverse effects of the public's dissatisfaction with the DC.

Most analysts attribute the public's eroding confidence in the DC as a governing party to the well-founded belief that there is widespread corruption in the Italian political system. The DC has been involved in many scandals in the last three decades. In the mid-1970s, it was involved in a number of scandals, while in the early 1980s the DC was tainted by the P2 scandal which involved the Masonic Lodge's infiltration into the Italian political system. Today, the DC is implicated in the *tangentopoli* (city of bribes) scandal that has led to charges against high ranking DC politicians like De Mita. In addition, some key party figures, like Giulio Andreotti, are under investigation for collusion with organized crime. In the 1950s and 1960s, the public viewed the DC as a "guarantor of Italian democracy" and "the godfather of the economic miracle", but today many Italians believe the DC is a corrupt party, which cannot resolve the serious problems plaguing Italy.

The DC's Attempts at Internal Reform

In response to its growing negative public image, the DC attempted to reform itself. The May 1974 divorce referendum and the 1975 regional elections forced the DC to understand that its popular image was deteriorating and that it could possibly lose power.[27] First, the DC leadership replaced

Fanfani, who symbolized the old, corrupt DC, with Benigno Zaccagnini, who was from the party's left-wing and considered honest and clean.

Zaccagnini then set out to reform the party under the slogans of *rinnovamento* (renewal) and the "new DC". Zaccagnini wanted to end political corruption by limiting the power of the factions, to revitalize the party and increase participation among the rank and file.[28] Zaccagnini's attacks on factional leaders (whom he called "tribal chieftains") engendered enthusiasm among the rank and file and he was able to introduce some minor reforms. In an attempt to reach out to voters who were not party members nor members of a Catholic organization, yearly *Feste dell' Amicizia* (Friendship Festivals) were organized, similar to the PCI's festivals. Zaccagnini also reformed membership practices by making it more difficult to inflate membership figures and by limiting the power of local sections to prevent a new member of an opposing faction from joining the party.[29]

Zaccagnini's attempts at party renewal failed for several reasons. First, he was not able to wrest a considerable amount of power from the factions. Although centre and right-wing factional leaders supported party reform, many only wanted to make cosmetic changes in order to improve the party's public standing without having to yield their power. Next, the degree of active participation among the membership did not increase. Third, between 1978 and 1980, the DC was more concerned about

developing a strategy towards the PCI than with reform. Furthermore, the DC maintained its level of support at 38 per cent in the 1976 and 1979 elections, which made many DC leaders indifferent towards the reform of the party. Hence, reforms were placed on the back burner.[30] Lastly, the DC was not only unable to convince the general public that it was undertaking credible reforms, but it failed to persuade many of its own party members. For instance, a March 1977 survey of 1001 DC members found that 56.7 per cent noticed changes in the party, while 32.3 per cent did not notice any changes. Of those that noticed changes, only 31.5 per cent thought these changes were positive, while 25.2 per cent perceived them to be negative.[31]

The renewal of the DC once again became an important issue in the early 1980s as the party's grass roots, young DC parliamentarians, and Catholic organizations urged the DC to renew itself. Moreover, the DC lost control of the prime ministership in June 1981 after holding this position for 36 years, and it was losing considerable support in the large urban centres. Lastly, the election of De Mita, who is from the party's left-wing, as DC secretary once again placed the renewal of the party a top priority.[32]

De Mita wanted to clean up the tarnished image of the DC through a dual policy of *rinnovamento* (renewal) and *rigore* (austerity).[33] *Rinnovamento* entailed reconstructuring the party organization in the large cities, limiting the power of

the factions, and replacing incumbents with people from Catholic organizations and the business community. *Rigore*, on the other hand, involved a shift in the DC's economic policy, in particular, a reduction in state intervention. The policies of *rinnovamento* and *rigore* were related since reducing state intervention in the economy could limit the power of the factions within the DC. De Mita wanted to change the DC from a brokerage party to a moderate conservative party. De Mita believed that the DC's role as broker only resulted in ambiguous policies and programmes, and immobilism. He wanted the "new DC" to be a party of clear ideas and choices, which attracted contemporary, knowledgeable opinion voters rather than exchange and *appartenenza* voters.

Nonetheless, the DC's attempts to reform itself ran into opposition from many DC faction leaders who charged De Mita with abandoning the DC's traditional role as broker of various socio-economic groups. They claimed that the DC had been Italy's leading party because of its catch-all party status.[34] In fact, opponents of the *rigore* policy warned that the DC would lose support among traditional sectors of its electorate, especially exchange voters, found primarily in the South.

The effectiveness of De Mita's reforms was first tested in the 1983 national election. The DC campaigned to end clientelism and also fought the election on the policies of *rigore* and *rinnovamento*.[35] The DC only obtained 32.9 per

cent of the vote, a 5.4 per cent decline from the 1979 election. The heaviest losses were recorded in the North, while smaller losses were registered in the South. Many northern voters supported the small secular parties of the centre and the MSI because, unlike the DC, they were not tainted by scandal and corruption. Hence, many voters viewed the DC as the "old DC" of corruption and poor government rather than the "new DC" of honesty and austerity.[36]

In contrast with the North, some have argued that the DC lost votes in the South because its programme of *rigore* angered many of the party's southern exchange voters.[37] The DC's share of the vote in the South was 41.2 per cent in 1972 and 42.9 per cent in 1979, but in 1983 it fell to 37.3 per cent.[38] Clientelistic voters and other socioeconomic categories threatened by *rigore* voted against the "new DC" of De Mita.[39] The DC also declined in support in the South because it lost control of the Ministry for the South, a vital source of patronage, to the PSI. The recession of the early 1980s reduced the public resources available for clientelism, but it simultaneously increased the South's reliance upon government entitlements and thereby bolstered those representatives and parties that had access to patronage.[40] The party that appeared to benefit from the southern clientelistic vote in the 1983 election was the PSI, which increased its share of the vote in South by 2.5 per cent.[41] In short, the "new DC" proposed by De Mita found itself in a

dilemma because it risked losing the support of southern exchange voters as it attempted to garner the support of more northern opinion voters.

The results of the 1983 election weakened De Mita's position within the party, but he managed to retain his position as party secretary and continued to try to reform the party. His efforts appeared to be effective when the DC obtained 35 per cent of the vote in the 1985 regional elections and 34.3 per cent in the 1987 national election. This was due in part to the revitalization of party organizations in Italy's ten largest cities and because the DC was not plagued by any major scandals.[42]

Table 4.1
Voters' Estimates of the Degree of Change Resulting from the DC's Reforms

	DC Voters	Voters in general
Little/No change	**49%**	**64%**
A Fair amount	**33%**	**20%**
A Great Deal	**6%**	**3%**
Don't Know	**12%**	**13%**

Source: Douglas A. Wertman, "DC Congress: the End of Factions?" in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 2, eds. R. Leonardi et al. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1988), p. 57.

However, most of the DC's gains can be attributed to traditional sources of support such as anti-communism and Catholicism; the latter was bolstered by the Church hierarchy's active involvement in the campaign, the DC's renewed links with the Catholic organizations, such as *Communione e Liberazione* (CL-Communion and Liberation), and

strong economic growth, largely the result of a flourishing international economy.[43]

Nonetheless, De Mita's attempts to reform the party, like Zaccagnini's failed.[44] First, as Table 4.1 reveals, he failed to convince DC supporters let alone voters, that positive reform had occurred within the DC. Second, as was true with Zaccagnini, the DC's relative success at the polls undermined De Mita's efforts to reform the party any further.[45] The DC was no longer threatened by a PCI *sorpasso* and its status as Italy's party of the relative majority was no longer in jeopardy. Thus, the need to reform the party declined in importance. These developments engendered an attitude of complacency within the DC leadership.

Third, De Mita was also responsible for the end of the reforms. He used factional criteria to allocate cabinet positions, which angered many reformers and prompted the Zaccagnini faction to withdraw its support of De Mita. Next, he accepted the position of prime minister in April 1988, which, because of the DC's unwritten rule opposing "double appointment" (no party figure can hold two positions at once) prevented him from keeping his position as party secretary.[46]

At the DC's 18th party Congress in 1989, De Mita was replaced by Arnaldo Forlani. The election of Forlani marked an end to De Mita's reforms, but more importantly, it represented a return to the "old DC". Forlani and his supporters reverted

to the DC's catch-all party status and they showed a willingness to rely upon negative factors such as anti-communism and Catholicism.[47] Hence, any serious reforms were shelved and the DC was once again content to simply govern.

However, by 1991 calls for party renewal began to emerge again from two prominent Christian Democrats, Francesco Cossiga, the President of the Republic and Mario Segni, the leader of a minority reform faction.[48] In September 1991, Cossiga chided the DC for its defence of *partitocrazia*. A groundswell of opposition and protest against *partitocrazia* gathered strength in the North, where many voters were angry with the government's high taxes, profligate spending on southern development and incompetence. The Northern League (*Lega Nord*-LN) led the anti-*partitocrazia* movement, which essentially attacked the Rome-centred and southern-controlled political class.[49] Cossiga warned that, if the DC did not genuinely reform itself and address Italy's problems, it would be doomed to extinction. Segni, on the other hand, criticized the DC's hesitancy about policy changes and electoral reform.[50] Meanwhile, in the South, the DC was tarnished by its alleged collusion with the Mafia.

Observers of the April 1992 election attributed the DC's losses to the virtual disappearance of anti-communism, the delayed effects of secularization, and the public's animosity towards *partitocrazia*. Of all these factors, the anti-*partitocrazia* movement was the most important in explaining

the DC's decline of 4.6 per cent.[51] The DC's losses were the heaviest in northern and north-central Italy, while, in the South, the DC declined slightly.[52] The "southernization" of the DC vote suggests that the DC is being punished by voters in the North because of its *malgoverno*, but, in the South, it is maintaining its level of support because it still controls a good portion of the patronage network.

The fact that the DC's negative public image became an important factor in the 1992 election is linked to the resolution of the communist question. The DC leadership did not completely grasp that the collapse of communism would rob the party of one of its most important sources of support (anti-communism). Moreover, the leadership failed to realize that it needed to replace declining sources of support (anti-communism and Catholicism) with new sources of support. With the communist question resolved, other issues such as the DC's negative public image became important. Essentially, the DC leadership failed to take advantage of the reformist space vacated by the PCI in the late 1980s. By not reforming itself and offering voters positive reasons to support it, the negative image of the DC adversely affected its electoral support.

The Political Strategies of the PCI: Undermining its Credibility as a Reformist Alternative

This section focuses on the political strategies of the PCI since the 1970s. An examination of these strategies will

reveal that the PCI failed to become a credible alternative to the DC because it lacked a clear political programme in the last twenty years.[53] This is the case because the PCI and its successor, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) failed to resolve a longstanding division between the left and right wings of party. Their lack of a clear political programme resulted in a decline in voter support for the PCI and PDS.

In particular, while the "Historic Compromise" strategy of the 1970s, and more specifically the PCI's involvement in the governments of national solidarity (1977-1979), may have won the support of some centre-left voters, they alienated many of the party's left-wing opposed to cooperation with the DC. Second, the "democratic alternative" strategy of the 1980s, which attempted to stop the PCI's decline in support among left-wing voters, alienated many centre-left voters it acquired in the mid-1970s.[54] These two strategies, in effect, made many progressive voters sceptical of the party's willingness and ability to change the system, undermined its credibility as an alternative to the DC, and ultimately led to a decline in support for the PCI.

While the ambiguous strategies of the PCI resulted in electoral losses, they probably prevented a rapid decline in support for the party and its successor, the PDS. In contrast, the French and Portuguese Communist Parties followed a dogmatic Marxist-Leninist stance, which resulted in a rapid erosion of their voter support during the 1980s.[55]

The Strategy of the Historic Compromise

In the 1979 election, the PCI fell from its all-time high of 34.4 per cent to 30.4 per cent. Between 1946 and 1976 the PCI steadily gained votes, so the 1979 election marked the first time that the PCI lost electoral support. The losses incurred in this election were partly the outcome of the PCI's "Historic Compromise" strategy, which was first articulated by party secretary Enrico Berlinguer in 1972.

The "Historic Compromise" had two goals. First, through cooperation with the DC, the PCI aimed to bring about significant change in Italy and stabilize the socioeconomic situation.[56] Second, the PCI tried to legitimize itself as a governing party and eventually push the DC into opposition.[57] The Historic Compromise appealed to the party's left-wing because of its emphasis on change and it pleased the right-wing because it would permit the PCI to improve its image as a party of government. In brief, the Historic Compromise represented a continuation of the PCI's ideological moderation and demonstrated Berlinguer's ability to balance the interests of both wings of the party.

The PCI adopted the Historic Compromise strategy because of the critical situation in which the left found itself in the early 1970s. The period of intense social mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s (student demonstrations and labour militancy), provoked a backlash from conservative elements in Italian society. Right-wing terrorist bombings,

which began in 1969 and continued in the early 1970s (known as the "strategy of tension"), violent disturbances organized by the MSI in southern Italy, and the MSI's strong showing in the South during the 1972 election, put the left and, in particular, the PCI, on the defensive. Most PCI strategists likened this backlash against profound social change to the rise of fascism in the early 1920s.[58] The PCI's interpretation of events reveals that the party's thinking was significantly shaped by the fascist experience.[59]

The PCI believed that only a concerted effort amongst anti-fascist political forces would protect democracy and assure significant change. Moreover, the PCI leadership postulated that if a leftist government came to power in Italy without the cooperation of the DC, that it would be overthrown by a military coup like Allende's leftist government in Chile.[60] Finally, the PCI also realized that if it ever wanted to oust the DC from power it would have to obtain more support from centre-left voters who usually voted for the PSI, PSDI and PRI.

In addition to a fear of a right-wing backlash, in 1973 Berlinguer assumed that Italian political alignments were stable and unlikely to change. Nevertheless, circumstances began to change after 1973. First, the 1974 divorce referendum revealed that Italy was secularized. Next, the PCI made substantial gains in the 1975 regional and municipal elections, coming within two percentage points of the DC. It

appeared that voters were beginning to see the PCI as an appealing alternative to an exceedingly corrupt and ageing DC, especially among young people and some progressive elements in society.[61] Surveys between 1967 and 1976 revealed that the PCI scored the highest of all the major parties in terms of honesty, good ideas, unity, youthfulness, modernity and representativeness.[62] Thus, the Historic Compromise, which was primarily defensive, appeared inappropriate for a situation which witnessed the electoral growth of the left.[63]

Despite the changes, the PCI continued with the Historic Compromise because it interpreted its success at the polls in the 1976 national election as an endorsement of the strategy.[64] After the 1976 election, the PCI supported the governments of national solidarity (1976-1979). Although the PCI eventually entered the "government majority" (the PCI no longer abstained, but voted in favour of the DC-led government) in 1978, the DC prevented the PCI from obtaining any cabinet positions because this would have given the PCI a chance to legitimize itself as a governing party. As a part of the government majority, the PCI supported economic austerity measures which hurt industrial workers, but achieved few substantive reforms as compensation. In the end, with pressure mounting on the PCI from its rank and file and trade unions, it withdrew its support from government, which led to early elections in 1979.

The Historic Compromise failed to achieve what it set out to accomplish. It did not effect considerable change, which angered left-wing supporters; and it failed to legitimize the PCI as a national governing party although it may have increased its democratic credibility. The Historic Compromise failed for two reasons. First, the PCI relied excessively upon the goodwill of the DC and, in particular, Aldo Moro, the DC statesman and chief architect of the national solidarity governments, who was assassinated by the Red Brigades in 1978. Moro was less hostile to the idea of the PCI fully entering government than many other DC leaders. In general, the DC outmanoeuvred the PCI by barring it from government, but still using its support of the government to stabilize the social and political situation.[65] Second, the Historic Compromise saw the PCI move from the left to the centre-left at a time when the party system was still tripolar in nature (left, right and centre). The PCI's move towards the centre always carried the risk of losing the support of their left-wing voters who demanded radical change, which is precisely what happened.

The Historic Compromise led to a decline in support for the PCI in the 1979 election because its cooperation with the DC angered party militants, left-wing unionists, radical youth and new opinion voters who wanted the PCI to remove the DC from office.[66] These groups supported the PCI in the mid-1970s because "the PCI became the reference point for all

those groups demanding change, or demanding an overhaul of the system."[67] On the other hand, these groups considered the DC as an obstacle to change. So, when the PCI supported the DC, the PCI came under attack for its moderation and lost some of the support of these groups.

In government, the PCI was subordinated to the DC and was reluctant to make excessive demands upon the DC because it wanted to portray itself as a responsible party and was more concerned with legitimizing itself as a governing party rather than effecting substantial change.[68] The Radical Party (PRad), a left-libertarian party promoting significant social reform, criticized the PCI for its involvement in the *partitocrazia*. Hence, some left-wing voters believed that the PCI had become like the traditional governing parties.[69] For many leftist voters in the 1970s, "the PCI's image and its credibility as the reforming party were tarnished."[70] Consequently, the PCI lost support in the 1979 election and most of it went to the PRad, which saw its vote increase from 1.1 per cent in 1976 to 3.5 per cent in 1979. The decline in support for the PCI opened up a reformist space on the left, which was filled by the PRad and smaller leftist parties.[71]

The PCI also failed to hold onto the gains it made in the South in the 1976 election because it was not able to meet the demands of southern exchange voters. This occurred because few public resources were available during the economic malaise of the 1970s and most of them were controlled by the DC.

Moreover, the PCI organization was not prepared for patronage politics.[72]

In short, the Historic Compromise strategy seemed to focus the PCI's efforts on legitimizing itself as a governing party, which appealed to centre-left voters, but angered many leftist supporters who wanted radical change. The party's inability and unwillingness to effect substantial reform in the 1970s created a lasting impression among leftist supporters that the PCI was no longer a reformist force, and this translated into a loss of votes for the PCI. Moreover, since the PCI never obtained cabinet posts, it never really proved to the Italian public that it could run the country responsibly. Thus, moderate centre-left voters were no more likely to support the PCI than before the Historic Compromise.

The Democratic Alternative

In 1980, the PCI advanced the strategy of the "democratic alternative" in an attempt to regain votes and credibility among disillusioned leftist voters.[73] The strategy involved the creation of a coalition, which included progressive parties and radical social movements, but excluded the DC. The PCI's main partner in a democratic alternative would be the PSI. However, any possible coalition with the PSI was unrealistic because the period in which the PSI advocated a government of the left had ended in 1976 when Craxi was elected party secretary. Craxi was the leader of the PSI's "autonomy" faction, which favoured independence from the

PCI.[74] The PSI re-entered government in 1980 and became increasingly critical of the PCI, which made the relationship between the two parties more corrosive. Under Craxi, the PSI sought to isolate the PCI and supplant it as the dominant party on the left in much the same manner that Francois Mitterrand's French Socialist Party isolated and supplanted the French Communist Party.[75]

Although the democratic alternative was unrealistic in some regards, the PCI did not have many options available. Most elements within the DC and PCI were not willing to support another Historic Compromise, ruling out cooperation with the DC. In order to avoid political isolation, the PCI was compelled to adopt this strategy with the hope that it could attract the support of smaller progressive parties and become the focal point of opposition to the DC. Lastly, the PCI itself was quite unsure of its political goals, so an ambiguous political strategy like the democratic alternative was quite appropriate.[76]

In the 1983 election, the PCI lost a half per cent of its support, but it failed to capitalize on the DC's electoral losses, suggesting that it was unable to gather moderate centre-left voters who supported the PSI. While the PCI's democratic legitimacy was not an important concern amongst these voters, the ambiguity of the democratic alternative made them wary of its ability to govern.

The PCI was expected to do well in the 1987 election due

to the collapse of the *pentapartito* (five-party) coalition that supported the Craxi government for three and half years, and because of the worsening relations between the DC and PSI.[77] But the PCI was also intensely critical of the PSI and Craxi between 1983 and 1986, which divided the working class and cost it support among the middle classes. The PCI declined from 29.9 per cent in 1983 to 26.6 per cent in the 1987 national election.

During the campaign, the PCI adhered to the democratic alternative and, like the 1983 election, the PCI leadership was vague about the parties that would be in the alternative. Part of this ambiguity may be attributed to the hostile positions of the PRad and PSI. Although such ambiguity allowed for more flexibility with regard to the formation of an alliance, it also disadvantaged the PCI since voters knew very little about the party's intended policies or programme.[78]

In addition, the PCI leadership followed a centrist path as it tried to reconcile the left and right wings of the party. It appealed to the left by allowing independent candidates from various social movements (environmental, feminist and pacifist) to run on party lists, while the PCI's overtures to the PSI about a possible alliance pleased the right wing. Nevertheless, the PCI's strategy of accommodation resulted in a heterogeneous selection of candidates, some of whom held very divergent and irreconcilable views. For instance, the PCI slate of candidates contained both anti and

pro nuclearists.[79] The PCI's attempt to appeal to both leftist and centre-left voters made many of these voters reluctant to support the PCI because they were uncertain about what the party represented. Thus, the PCI lost votes, some of which went to the PSI (+2.9 per cent from 1983)[80], Proletarian Democracy (DP) (+0.2 per cent) and the PRad (+0.4 per cent). The PCI also was unable to capture votes that went to the Greens (2.5 per cent).

The PCI's losses were heaviest in large urban cities like Milan and Turin. The loss of support in Milan indicated that the party failed to mobilize the new middle-class electorate, while its decline in the working class areas of Turin (Settimo Torinese) and Milan (Sesto San Giovanni) occurred because of industrial restructuring. The party also fared poorly among young voters (those under the age of 25).

In short, many centre-left voters were wary of supporting the PCI because its democratic alternative strategy contained overtures to the radical left. But more importantly, it demonstrated that the tensions between the left and right wings of the PCI were unresolved, which undermined the party's image as a credible reformist alternative to the DC.[81]

The Dissolution of the PCI and the Formation of the PDS

To deal with the PCI's malaise, the party elected Achille Occhetto as party secretary in 1988. Occhetto launched a "refoundation" of the PCI in March 1989, which included an end to democratic centralism. Open discussion, voting, and the

existence of majorities and minorities would be allowed in order to resolve the constant equivocation in the party programme. Next, the PCI declared an end to consociational politics. In other words, the PCI would act as a true opposition and portray itself as the alternative to the DC. The alternative would be based on a clear programme of institutional reform (including electoral reform), workplace democracy and support for the demands of "progressive" social movements (environmentalism, feminism and pacificism). Lastly, the document indicated that democracy was the only road to socialism, a statement which affirmed the party's democratic credentials.[82]

Although Occhetto renewed the PCI's programme, he failed to specify the parties that would be a part of a democratic alternative. The right wing of the party was not pleased with the document because it did not explicitly state that the PCI would form an alliance with the PSI. Moreover, it seemed that the democratic alternative ranged from a "go-it-alone" strategy to an alliance that included radical social movements. Thus, the PCI's strategy still remained vague.[83]

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe compelled Occhetto to accelerate the PCI's renewal. In November 1989, he proposed the dissolution of the PCI and the formation of new political party of the left. Like previous strategies, the objective of Occhetto's proposals was to move the PCI from opposition to government.[84] However, Occhetto's proposals

encountered resistance from the *Cossutiani* (the pro-Soviet wing led by Armando Cossutta), the leftist *Ingraiani* and from the centrist *Berlingueriani*.

Occhetto's proposals were opposed by a third of the party's members who favoured a refounding of the PCI (keeping the party name, but still reforming the party) at the twentieth party congress. Nevertheless, the PCI was dissolved at the twentieth congress in January 1991 and the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) was born. The formation of the PDS led to the departure of the *Cossutiani* from the party. Cossutta formed the Communist Refoundation (RC), which was able to obtain support from some of the left-wing of the PDS and absorbed the DP which obtained 1.7 per cent of the vote in 1987.

On the other hand, most of the PDS's left-wing, who called themselves the "Democratic Communists", remained in the PDS to try to give the party a radical bent.[85] The PDS also contained a centrist faction led by Occhetto and a right wing faction called the *riformisti*. With these divisions, the party failed to develop a clear programme heading into the 1992 election. This division was apparent at the founding congress of the PDS, which was dominated by one issue, the Gulf War. In a move to placate the left wing, Occhetto called for a cease-fire and an immediate withdrawal of Italian troops from the Gulf. This move angered the *riformisti* because it worsened relations with the PSI, which favoured armed intervention.

In the 1992 election, the PDS only garnered 16.1 per cent of the vote and, when combined with the RC vote (minus the DP vote of 1987), the ex-PCI received roughly 20.0 per cent of the vote.[86] As in previous elections, the ex-PCI's support plummeted because many voters did not feel the PDS was a credible alternative.[87] One of the reasons Occhetto dissolved the PCI and formed the PDS was to resolve the division between the left and right wings of the party, but this did not happen. The left-right split that badgered the PCI plagued the PDS and resulted once again in ambiguous policies.[88]

Many voters distrusted the PDS because of the presence of a radical left-wing faction within the party. After the PDS's acquiescence to the left-wing on the Gulf War, some voters feared that the left-wing would have considerable influence over the leadership. In fact, 32 per cent of the party's National Council is composed of members who belong to left-wing factions (Democratic Communists-27% and Reformers and Oppositionists-5%).[89] Many other parties and voters viewed the PDS's stance on the Gulf War as irresponsible and raised questions about the party's commitment to European security in general.[90]

In short, the PCI (PDS) has lost electoral support since 1976 because it failed to develop a coherent political programme.[91] Instead, it tried to cover up its internal divisions by accommodating many divergent points of view into

one ambivalent political line, which made many voters wary of the party. While the dissolution of the PCI and the establishment of the PDS allayed fears about its commitment to democracy, many voters remained unwilling to vote for a party that did not articulate a clear programme in the last twenty years.

A Critique of the Political Strategy Model

There is one major problem with this model. First, it may have been very difficult for either party to have developed a coherent strategy that dealt could simultaneously address the different needs of the South and North. Bridging the social, economic and political differences between the North and South seemed paradoxical for both parties. In the case of the DC, the policy of *rigore* hurt the DC in the South, but did not earn support for the party in the North. Had the party abandoned clientelistic politics altogether, it may have lost more votes in the South. Instead, the DC's electoral decline in the South was much slower than in other parts of the country largely as a result of clientelism.

In the case of the PCI, the party may have maintained an ambiguous stance because if it moved too far towards the centre, it would have lost more votes on the left and if moved to the left, it would have lost the support of centrist voters. In short, the realities of Italian society may have precluded both parties from adopting any other strategies than the ones employed.

Nonetheless, the vast disparities between the North and South are not as intractable as previously mentioned. One study challenged the conventional view that clientelism is the inevitable mode of political behaviour in southern Italy.[92] Southerners along with northerners are presently showing their disapproval of the DC's clientelism and corruption. In addition, a move towards the centre on the part of the PCI may have benefitted the party since there was less ideological polarization beginning in the late 1970s.

Conclusion

This chapter examined several political factors that explain the electoral decline of the DC and PCI since the late 1970s. First, support for the DC declined because the resolution of the communist question rendered the DC's anti-communist vote obsolete. Second, the collapse of communism led to a decline the PCI's vote because many voters still associated the PCI with the failure of communism abroad. Next, the DC leadership failed to reform the party's negative public image and continued to rely on negative factors, which resulted in a decline in its share of the vote. Lastly, The PCI (PDS) lost electoral support because many voters did not view it as a credible alternative, which largely resulted from its ambiguous strategies and policies.

The next chapter examines the recent changes to the party system. They include party fragmentation, the decline in traditional party support and the emergence of new political

parties such as the *Lega Nord* (Northern League-LN) and the *Rete* (Network), which are challenging the DC and PCI, for national power. The chapter also addresses the question of whether the North-South split and the centre-periphery cleavage are becoming more significant in the Italian party system.

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33. Chubb, p. 74.

34. Pasquino, p. 106; Wertman, Losers, p. 42.

35. Paul Ginsborg, A History of Contemporary History: Society and Politics, 1943-1988 (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 419.

36. Chubb, p. 75.

37. Ginsborg, p. 419; Chubb, pp. 76-79.

38. Mario Caciagli, "Erosioni e Mutamenti nell'Elettorato Democristiano", in Vent'anni di elezioni in Italia, 1968-1987, eds. M. Caciagli and A. Spreafico (Padova: Liviana Editrice, 1990), p. 13.

39. Chubb, p. 78.

40. Ibid., p. 79.

41. Chubb, p. 79; Howard Penniman, ed. Italy at the Polls, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), pp. 315-7; Howard R. Penniman, ed. Italy at the Polls, 1983 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 198-201.

42. Hellman, Italian, p. 278.

43. Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi, "The 1985 Local Government Elections", in Italian Politics: A Review, eds. R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (London: Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1986), pp. 16-8.

44. Leonardi and Wertman, pp. 134-5.

45. Mario Caciagli, "The 18th DC Congress: from De Mita to Forlani and the Victory of Neo-Doroteism", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 5, eds. R. Catanzaro and F. Sabetti (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), p. 13.

46. Ibid., p. 15.

47. Ibid., pp. 18-21.

48. Vincent Della Sala and David Hine, "The Italian General Election of 1992," Electoral Studies, 11:4 (Dec. 1992), p. 363.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Donovan, Election, p. 173.

52. Besson and Bibes, Map 10.

53. Ginsborg, p. 420.

54. Raphael Zariski, "Italy", in Politics in Western Europe, ed. M. Donald Hancock (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1993), p. 344; David Hine, "Italy: Parties and Party Government under Pressure", in Political Parties, ed. Alan Ware (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987), p. 82; Gundle, p. 163.

55. Thomas Mackie and Richard Rose, The International Almanac of Electoral History (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1991), pp. 153;

56. Stephen Hellman, "The Italian Communist Party between Berlinguer and the Seventeenth Congress", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 1, eds. R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti (London: Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1986), p. 51; Leonardi and Wertman, p. 78.

57. Mark Donovan, "Party Strategy and Centre Domination in Italy," West European Politics, 12:4 (Oct. 1989), p. 118.

58. Stephen Hellman, "The Longest Campaign: Communist Party Strategy And The Elections of 1976", in Italy at the Polls: The Parliamentary Elections of 1976, ed. Howard R. Penniman (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), pp. 162-4.

59. Hellman, Italian, p. 245.

60. Hellman, Campaign, p. 166.

61. Pasquino, p. 101.

62. Sani, p. 106.

63. Pasquino, p. 101.

64. Guido Martinotti, "Electoral Trends in Italy: The Cycle 1970-1985," West European Politics, 9:2 (April 1986), p. 270; Hellman, Italian, p. 249; Pasquino, p. 100.

65. Donovan, "Party Strategy and Centre Domination in Italy," West European Politics, 12:4 (Oct. 1989), pp. 118-120.

It is difficult to predict what would have happened had the PCI refused to be part of the national solidarity governments. If it refused to support the government, it may have been branded as irresponsible. When it was in government, many leftists branded it as being too conciliatory.

66. Peter Lange, "Crisis and Consent, Change and Compromise: Dilemmas of Italian Communism in the 1970s", in Italy in Transition, eds. Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow, (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd.), p. 122; Pasquino, p. 101; Hine, p. 82; Zariski, p. 342.

67. Pasquino, p. 101.

68. Ibid.

69. Hellman, Seventeenth, p. 51; Donovan, Party, pp. 119-120.

70. Marcello Fedele, "The Ambiguous Alternative: The Italian Communist Party in the 1983 Elections", in Italy at the Polls, 1983, ed. Howard R. Penniman (Duke, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 72.

71. Pasquino, p. 101.

72. Pasquino, p. 101; Donovan, Party, p. 124.

73. Pasquino, p. 103.

74. Donovan, Party, p. 121.

75. Ibid., p. 107.

76. Ginsborg, p. 420.

77. Vincenzo Guizzi, "Italy's Elections and Crisis: 14-15 June," Government and Opposition, 22:4 (Autumn 1987), p. 431; Donald Sassoon, "The 1987 Elections and the PCI", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 3, eds. Robert Leonardi and Piergiorgio Corbetta (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989), p. 131; Gundle, p. 159.

78. Sassoon, p. 132.

79. Hellman, Italian, p. 279.

80. The success of the PSI may be attributed to its position in the coalition governments. The PSI governed with the DC, but, at the same time, acted like an opposition party by harshly criticizing the DC and taking a conflictual stance towards it (the

strategy of centre-based bipolarity). Since the PSI was not subordinated to the DC while in government like the PCI was during the governments of national solidarity, some PCI voters viewed the PSI as the party that was able to effect reform within government. In addition, Craxi was prime minister (1983-1987) during a time of economic growth. Hence, many associated the economic boom of the mid-1980s with the PSI. Nonetheless, the growth in electoral support for the PSI in the 1980s was regionally skewed with most of it in the South, rendering even more absurb the PCI's proposal for a PCI-PSI alternative to the DC.

See Donovan, Party, pp. 121-125; Sassoon, p. 144.

81. Gundle, p. 163.

82. Martin J. Bull, "Perestroika is Catching: The Italian Communist Party Elects a New Leader," The Journal of Communist Studies, 5:1 (March 1989), pp. 81-2.

83. G. Grant Amyot, "The PCI and Occhetto's New Course: The Italian Road to Reform", in Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 4, eds. R. Catanzaro and R. Nanetti (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 155-6.

84. Bull and Daniels, p. 41.

85. Philip Daniels, "The Democratic Party of the Left and the 1992 Italian General Election," The Journal of Communist Studies, 8:3 (September 1992), p. 130.

86. The RC received 5.6 per cent of the vote for the lower house in the 1992 national election, while the DP obtained 1.7 per cent in the 1987 national election. Hence, the ex-PCI portion of the RC vote is 3.9 per cent (5.6% - 1.7% + 3.9%) assuming that all 3.9 per cent came from the ex-PCI. Thus, the ex-PCI received approximately 20.0 per cent of the vote in the 1992 election (16.1% + 3.9% = 20.0%).

87. Stephen Hellman, "Il Colasso del Consenso," Corriere Canadese, Wednesday-Thursday, April 8-9, 1992, p. 2.

88. Bull, Death, p. 25.

89. Martin J. Bull, "The Italian Communist Party's Twentieth Congress and the Painful Birth of the **Partito Democratico della Sinistra**," The Journal Of Communist Studies, 7:2 (June 1991), pp. 263-4.

90. Bull, Twentieth, pp. 261; 263.

91. Belloni, p. 95; Hellman, Birth, p. 72.

92. Caroline White, Patrons and Partisans: A Study of Politics in Two Southern Italian Communi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

CHAPTER FIVE: RECENT CHANGES IN THE ITALIAN PARTY SYSTEM

Chapters three and four focused on societal and political factors that contributed to the electoral decline of the PCI and DC. This chapter examines recent changes in the Italian party system. These changes include a steady increase in party fragmentation, a combined decrease in the share of the vote for the traditional political parties (DC, PCI/PDS, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), the Italian Social Movement (MSI), the Italian Republican Party (PRI), the Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI) and the Italian Liberal Party (PLI)), and an increase in support for new political parties such as the *Rete* (The Network) and the *Lega Nord* (The Northern League-LN).

This chapter contains three main sections. First, a description of the changes in the party system is provided. Next, new political movements such as, the *Rete* and the LN are investigated. The study of the LN involves a detailed examination of the composition of its electorate and an analysis of the party's growing electoral appeal. Lastly, the emergence of new political movements also indicates that two cleavages are becoming important: the North-South split and the modernity-tradition dichotomy, which is also known as the centre-periphery or the state-civil society cleavage.

Party Fragmentation and the Crisis of the Traditional Parties

Table 5.1 shows that party fragmentation has increased since the mid-1970s. Not only are there more parties competing in national elections, but there are more parties gaining representation in the Chamber of Deputies. Although party fragmentation in the Italian party system should not come as a surprise to most students of Italian politics, the fact that fragmentation increased since the mid-1970s is important.[1] Table 5.1 reveals that the number of parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies nearly doubled over a twenty year period (1972-1992).

Table 5.1
The Number of Parties with Seats in The Chamber of Deputies

1972	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992
9	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**16**

Source: Elections Since 1945: A Worldwide Reference Compendium, (Chicago: St. James Press, 1989), p. 180.
Vincent Della Sala and David Hine, "The Italian General Election of 1992," Electoral Studies, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Dec. 1992), p. 364.

An examination of party fragmentation is important for two reasons. First, an increase in the number of parties in the lower house makes it more difficult to form stable coalition governments since more parties are needed to form governments with workable parliamentary majorities. In addition, an increase in party fragmentation indicates that the Italian electorate as a whole has not yet rallied around an alternative that could replace the DC as the plurality party.

Another changing aspect of the Italian party system is the

decline in electoral support for the traditional political parties. For instance, in 1976, the traditional parties obtained 95.0 per cent of the votes cast, but in 1992, this figure fell to 74.7 per cent. Most of the votes that the traditional parties lost have gone to new political parties such as LN, *Rete*, the Radical Party (PRad), the Green Party, Proletarian Democracy (DP) and Communist Refoundation (RC). As Table 5.2 indicates, new political parties increased their share of the total vote ten-fold.

Table 5.2
Percentage Share of the Vote Obtained by New Political Parties in Italy, 1976-1992

(Percentage of eligible votes cast)

1976	1979	1983	1987	1992
2.7	**6.8**	**6.4**	**10.1**	**25.3**

Source: Elections since 1945: A Worldwide Reference Compendium (Chicago: St. James Press, 1989), p. 180.
Vincent Della Sala and David Hine, "The Italian General Election of 1992," Electoral Studies, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Dec. 1992), p. 364.

The dramatic increase in the share of the vote obtained by new parties since 1983 may reflect the public's dissatisfaction with the government's corruption, clientelism and inefficiency. It also may reflect the electorate's desire to see profound change in the political system.

The Rise of New Political Movements

This section briefly examines the *Rete* and the LN, which has become the main challenger to the DC and PCI in the Italian party system. In addition, the LN is a good illustration of a

party that has responded to the yearning of Italian voters for political modernization. Political modernity entails the separation of public and private spheres of interest, bureaucratic rationality as well as an alternation of parties in government, something which has been noticeably absent in the Italian party system.[2]

Rete

The *Rete* was formed in Sicily in 1990 by the former DC mayor of Palermo, Leoluca Orlando. As the mayor of Palermo in 1987, Orlando formed a coalition government with the PCI and the Greens instead of the PSI because he felt that the latter was conspiring with the Mafia. The coalition with the PCI and Greens allowed Orlando to launch a political struggle against the Mafia and clean up political life. However, his actions prompted resistance from DC leaders. When Andreotti and Forlani blocked Orlando's attempts at reforming the coalition in 1990, Orlando quit the DC and formed the *Rete*.[3]

The *Rete* wants to end the traditional parties' control of the political system since it permits the Mafia to continue to influence the system.[4] The party also wants to end government corruption and supports substantial institutional reform.[5] In the 1991 regional elections, the *Rete* received 7.3 per cent of the vote in Sicily and in the 1992 election it increased to 9.9 per cent. The party did extremely well in Palermo where it received 24.5 per cent of the vote, second only to the DC. Overall, the *Rete* garnered 1.9 per cent of the national vote and

12 seats in the lower house.[6] In the local elections of June 1993, the party obtained 3.2 per cent of the national vote, won 7 mayoral contests and finished second in the mayoralty race in Turin. In the November 1993 local elections, Orlando was once again elected mayor of Palermo.

Most of the *Rete*'s support in Sicily has not come from the supporters of the two most corrupt and clientelistic parties (the DC and PSI), but from those who would have supported the PDS, the party which traditionally fought against corruption.[7] More importantly, the *Rete* represents a challenge to the pervasive *partitocrazia* that exists in Italy. *Partitocrazia* resulted in collusion between the governing political parties and private groups interested in procuring state contracts and subsidies. In the South, many of these contracts and subsidies ended up in the hands of organized crime groups, such as the Mafia and the Camorra.[8] It is precisely this insidious form of state intervention in the South that the Rete has attacked.

The Northern League

The Northern League (LN) is a federation of regional leagues established in 1991 under the leadership of Senator Umberto Bossi, leader of the *Lega Lombarda* (Lombard League-LL). The LN consists of regional leagues from Veneto, Piedmont, Tuscany, and Lombardy of which the Lombard League (LL) is the largest and most important. The LN favours a federal system (the division of Italy into 3 regions: North, Centre and South) and advocates a reduction in income tax, the privatization of public

enterprises, an end to funding for the South, wage differentials between North and South, and regional control of education.[9]

The LL first contested elections in the 1985 regional elections. In the 1987 national election, it won 0.5 per cent of the national vote and 2.6 per cent in the North. In the 1992 national election, the LN won 8.7 per cent of the vote nationally and 20.5 per cent in the North. Throughout most of northern Italy, the LN became the second largest party and, in Milan, it became the plurality party.[10] In fact, no other party has seen its share of the vote increase so significantly and rapidly in postwar Italy. Dismissed by some critics as a flash in the pan movement, the LN, in a matter of five years, has moved from relative electoral obscurity to seriously challenging the DC and PDS for local power.[11]

The rise of the LN is the result of several factors. First, the departure of anti-communism, an issue at the heart of domestic politics in post-war Italy, facilitated the rise of the LN. The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and the end to the Cold War shifted the focus of political discussion and electoral competition from anti-communism to the failures, corruption and clientelism of *partitocrazia*.[12] Most northern voters willingly tolerated the considerable graft, patronage and excessive spending of the DC and PSI because it was necessary for keeping the PCI out of national office. Once anti-communism disappeared, many northerners no longer could tolerate the reckless use of public

resources.[13]

Second, the European Community and the creation of the single market also explains the sudden rise of the LN. The single market has introduced the language and policies of "competitiveness" into the Italian polity at a time when the underlying force of the Italian political system -anti-communism- disintegrated. The LN has utilized Italy's entry into the single market as a catalyst against *partitocrazia*.

Lastly, the failure of the DC-led regime to end *partitocrazia* and to respond to the new desires of northern voters (an attack on political corruption, and the desire for efficient public services, fiscal responsibility, relief from apparently high levels of taxation, an abatement of the state's penetration of civil society and an alternation of parties in power) contributed to the LN's success.[14] In contrast, the LN has denounced *partitocrazia*, addressed these concerns, and offered a solution: federalism.[15]

To further understand the rapid electoral rise of the LN, it is worthwhile to thoroughly analyze the party's electoral appeal. It is useful to examine who votes for the LN because it will provide the background for the current debate about the type of party the LN represents and it will shed some light on the party's electoral appeal.

Who votes for the Northern League

The LN's electoral supporters come from all social groups and from all points on the ideological spectrum. In terms of

social composition, the LN receives support from lower middle class workers, industrial workers, artisans, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, businesspersons, and well educated and less educated youth.[16] However, most of its support is from professionals and white collar workers.[17] The fact that the LN receives support from many social groups indicates two key points.

First, the LN's composition is heterogeneous and is similar to that of the DC (see Chapters Two and Three). This suggests that the LN is obtaining the voter support of groups that primarily voted for the DC in the past (except for industrial workers).[18] In addition, the LN is directly competing with the DC for voter support in the white zone. In fact, the LN has made significant inroads among voters who are peripheral members of the Catholic subculture.

Second, the LN is slowly obtaining the support of northern industrial workers, who usually support the PCI/PDS. The dissolution of the PCI and the establishment of the PDS did not arrest the deterioration of its electoral support among blue collar workers. Industrial workers are attracted to the LN because workers see the LN as a party for ordinary people, while the PDS is perceived by some blue collar workers as an intellectual party. This view of the PDS is damaging its support among the working class in northern Italy.[19] In short, the LN's growing appeal among northern industrial workers poses problems for the PDS. The gradual erosion of support for the PDS

among blue collar workers in the North may imply that many voters perceive the PDS as being an integral part of *partitocrazia*.[20]

The LN also received electoral support from voters who represent different points on the ideological spectrum.[21] For instance, in the 1992 national election, the LN received 38 per cent of its support from ex-DC voters, 33 per cent from ex-PSI voters, 11 per cent from ex-PCI supporters, 9 per cent from voters who abstained in the 1987 election and 9 per cent from those who supported the leagues in 1987.[22] These figures suggest that most of the LN's support comes from the DC and PSI, followed by the PCI.

The Nature of the Northern League

While it might be too early to be really certain about the nature of LN's policies and appeal, some scholars have attempted to classify the party. In a recent article, Robert Leonardi and Monique Kovacs argue that the LN is a new catch-all party. They base their claim on the heterogeneous composition of the LN's electorate and on the notion that the party's appeal is not built on the traditional political cleavages (ideology, religion and class). Nonetheless, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, to categorize a party on the basis of the composition of its electorate rather than by its actions and policies is reductionist and simplistic.[23] In addition, the regional appeal of the LN and the unlikeliness that it will become a national party, make it difficult to categorize the LN as a

catch-all party like the DC. Moreover, while the electoral appeal of the LN is not based on class and religion, the party's neo-conservative ideology attracts voter support. This may not be apparent at first because the LN often couches its ideology in terms of common sense. Hence, the classification of the LN as a catch-all party is simplistic, if not inaccurate.

Other scholars have suggested that the LN represents a "radical right-wing populist" party.[24] "Radical" in this case implies a repudiation of the established sociocultural and sociopolitical system and support for individual accomplishment, a free market economy, and less state intervention in the economy. "Right wing" involves a rejection of individual and social equality, opposition to the social assimilation of marginalized groups and coded xenophobic statements. "Populist" includes an exploitation of the public's feelings of uneasiness and disappointment, and appeals to ordinary people and their common sense.[25]

The LN appears to meet the criteria of a radical right-wing populist party. The LN is considered radical because it rejects Italy's centralized unitary state and wants to replace it with a federal system because it feels that Italy was never ethnically, historically or culturally homogeneous.[26] Thus, the LN is challenging the political system that has been in place since 1870.

Second, the LN is a right-wing party because it opposes immigration from Third World countries. It is also a right-wing

party because it makes thinly veiled racist statements. For instance, in July 1993 Bossi called Muslims "barbarians". He claimed that the comment referred to the party's foreign policy towards Islamic countries, but the comment appealed to racist sentiments in Italy.[27]

The LN is also a populist party because it has capitalized on the public's uncertainty about Italy's competitive position-given its huge public debt and the perception of an inefficient public sector-in the European Community's single market. The party also is popular among many ordinary Italians because Bossi uses virile language that they can understand and avoids the convoluted political jargon that most Italian politicians employ to characterize social and political events.[28] For example, during the June 1993 mayoral election campaign in Milan, Bossi called left-wing candidate Nando Dalla Chiesa a *cornuto* (a cuckold).[29] In short, the LN appears to be more of a radical right-wing populist party than a catch-all party despite the fact that most of its voters are from the centre of the political spectrum.[30] The next section explains the LN's electoral appeal.

The Electoral Appeal of the Northern League

The electoral appeal of the LN is primarily based on four factors, which include: the LN's anti-*meridionalismo* (anti-southern stance), anti-immigrant stance, regional identity and anti-*partitocrazia*.[31] Among these reasons, some have argued that the LN's anti-*partitocrazia* stance is the most important

factor in explaining the electoral surge of the LN.[32] For example, a study found that over 80 per cent supported the LN solely because of its anti-*partitocrazia* stance.[33] More importantly, although it is a new political party, the multi-faceted appeal of the LN explains its growing electoral support. The LN has avoided the fate of other anti-*partitocrazia* parties, such as the PRad and the Greens. Both parties concentrated on single issues-civil liberties in the case of the PRad; the environment in the case of the Greens-which severely limited their electoral growth.[34]

The Lega Nord's anti-Meridionalismo

Bossi and others first based anti-*meridionalismo* on the belief that southerners were culturally different, rejected modern values and were dependent on the state. However, many said that this was "racist", which prompted the LN to change its views on southerners. The LN now argues that it is against the clientelistic politics of the South perpetrated by *partitocrazia*, but not against southerners per se.[35] In other words, the LN argues that its anti-*meridionalismo* is more a function of its opposition to *partitocrazia* than racism.[36] However, the LN's evolution on the issue of racism is doubtful because Bossi continues to make covert racist statements.

The LN's anti-southern posture is based on four key factors. First, some northerners harbour anti-southern emotions because many southerners have come to the North and compete with northerners for jobs in the public sector. Moreover, northerners

harbour anti-southern sentiments because the public sector, whose employees are disproportionately from the South, provides poor services. Many northerners believe that the government is more concerned with providing employment to southerners than providing quality and efficient public services to northerners because it generates electoral support for the governing parties in the South.

This has led to the wide-spread perception that the North is being controlled by politicians and bureaucrats in Rome, who are primarily from the South. This perception does contain some element of truth as 60 per cent of the public administration is composed of southerners who make up roughly a third of the Italian population.[37] However, southerners only occupy 38 per cent of the top positions in the major political parties.[38] Although figures do not fully substantiate the "southernization" of public life, the fact that most of the support received by the governing parties (DC and PSI) now comes from the South reinforces this view. During the 1980s, the DC and PSI increasingly fought over spoils, undermining their credibility in government. Hence, the government's emphasis upon the alleviation of southern unemployment over the efficient delivery of public services is largely responsible for producing anti-southern feelings.[39]

A second factor that contributed to the LN's anti-southernism is the transfer of northern private sector jobs to the South in order to take advantage of public subsidies offered

by government. Despite the fact that large sums of public funds have been allocated to the South, it remains economically underdeveloped when compared with northern Italy. For instance, by the 1970s the South's share of the national GDP remained unchanged from what it was 20 years before. Incomes in the South between 1945 and 1980 were 50 per cent below the national average, while in the 1980s, they were 40 per cent below the national average.[40] Since state intervention has not worked in the South, many northerners feel that the capital allocated to the South is a waste of taxpayers' money. Thus, many northerners believe that public funds are profligately spent in the South in order for the governing parties to consolidate their electoral support there.

A third element in the LN's anti-southernism is its anti-Mafia posture. According to the LN, an end to the *partitocrazia* would facilitate the state's fight against the Mafia. Many northerners think that the governing parties do not want to eradicate the Mafia because it could jeopardize a sizeable portion of its electoral base in the South. The collusion between the Mafia and the government has created anti-southern feelings amongst some northerners.

Finally, cultural differences between a "European" North and a "Mediterranean" South have contributed to the LN's anti-*meridionalismo*.[41] Many northerners hold anti-southern sentiments because those southerners who live in the North have not integrated into the North's "European" culture, which

stresses individual rights and impersonal rule. Instead, these southerners maintain their "Mediterranean" life-style, which is based on particularism and clientelism.[42]

Anti-Immigrant Sentiments

The electoral appeal of the LN also stems from the party's anti-immigrant posture. Anti-immigrant feelings began to emerge in the latter half of the 1980s as immigrants began to arrive in the major urban centres of the North.[43] This allowed the national government to pass social costs such as housing, health care, food, clothing and policing on to local northern communities. These developments generated anti-immigrant sentiments amongst northerners.

While the national government's immigration policy may have engendered anti-immigrant feelings among northerners, the LN has also manipulated anti-immigrant sentiments among northerners, many of whom feel that immigrants, especially visible minorities, are a threat to Italian culture. The LN wants immigration from the Third World halted because it believes that it poses a cultural threat to Italy. Milan city council, now headed by the LN, is considering the expulsion of immigrants from Milan.[44]

The Lega Nord's Regional Identity

The establishment of a new collective identity based on regionalism, partly explains the electoral appeal of the LN, and, in particular, the *Lega Lombarda*. This regional identity

primarily centres on the Lombard community, which is characterized by hard work and honesty.[45] However, when the LN was established, regional identity was extended to include the "people of the Po Valley."[46]

While few people support the LN's integral federalism, disaffected voters who are looking for an alternative to the DC and PCI/PDS are attracted to the LN because of the new collective identity it offers voters.[47] The growing prominence of regionalism as an ideology in Italy is largely a result of the crisis of Communism and Catholicism, two ideologies which dominated the political landscape until the 1980s.[48] The decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures in Italy created an ideological void in the Italian political system, which the *Lega Lombarda* filled with the ideology of regionalism.[49]

In many of the small towns and medium sized cities of the white zone, the LN's regional identity is supplanting the region's Catholic identity.[50] This shows the continued importance of subcultures in the Italian political system. Like the Catholic and Communist subcultures, the LN subculture is obtaining support from many collateral organizations which, in the past, integrated individuals into the two dominant subcultures.[51] The LN provides a sense of communal belonging to voters, especially those that were previously inactive and alienated from traditional meeting places such as the Church or factory.[52]

The Lega Nord's anti-partitocrazia appeal

The LN has enjoyed electoral success in the North because of its harsh attack on corruption and inefficiency in the national government and its opposition to *partitocrazia*. In the eyes of many voters, *partitocrazia* is synonymous with the traditional political parties that have existed in Italy since the late 1940s. The governing political parties used the state apparatus to provide material benefits to loyal party supporters at the expense of the general public. The *tangentopoli* scandal, involving thousands of politicians and businesses charged with receiving and paying bribes for the awarding of public contracts at the national and local level, is a current reminder of the corruption and decay of *partitocrazia*.

Partitocrazia has been used by the DC and PSI to counteract a decline in their share of subcultural and opinion voters in the 1980s.[53] The use of clientelism benefited both parties in the South, where they increased their share of the vote. Many northern Italians are opposed to *partitocrazia* because it has obscured the division between the public and private domains, especially in the South where almost all economic activity is dependent on state intervention. The LN wants to prevent *partitocrazia* from swallowing private initiative and the entrepreneurial culture that exists in the North.[54]

For decades the major political parties positioned centrally nominated functionaries in the regional, provincial and local governments of the North. These party functionaries

were not concerned with local issues, but instead were interested in maintaining electoral support for their respective political parties through the use of patronage. In the end, local interests were subordinated to the interests of the major national parties, which eventually resulted in an electoral revolt of northern Italians against corrupt and unresponsive parties in government.[55]

In short, the LN's anti-*partitocrazia* stance is one of its primary sources of support because many voters, especially northerners, are tired of a system of government that has bred patronage, corruption, incompetency, political immobilism, and distrust in government.[56] For instance, a 1980 survey found that 85 per cent of Italians believed that the political class is dishonest, while 70 per cent believed it was incompetent. This level of distrust continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s, but did not manifest itself in anti-government protest until the early 1990s.

The Emergence of the North-South and Centre-Periphery Cleavages

The electoral ascent of the LN and the *Rete* indicates the growing importance of two cleavages in the Italian party system: the North-South and the centre-periphery cleavages. In the past, the Italian party system was dominated by religious, class and ideological cleavages. The secularization of Italian society reduced the saliency of the religious cleavage, while postmaterialism and post-industrialization diminished the importance of class politics. Moreover, the PCI/PDS's move to

the centre since the 1970s and a general decline in ideological polarization in Western society diminished the significance of the traditional left-right ideological division.[57]

The electoral climb of the LN indicates that a cleavage based on a North-South dichotomy has emerged. The North-South split has always existed in Italy but it has remained latent in the Italian party system since 1946. However, by 1990, the North-South split became more meaningful when the regional leagues used the North-South dichotomy to galvanize voters.[58]

The North-South dichotomy resurfaced in 1990 because the disappearance of anti-communism gave northerners an opportunity to finally complain about the state's subsidization of the South, which was a major feature of the post-war national party system. The large sums of state capital directed to the South did not substantially diminish the socioeconomic gap between the North and South. The end result was that the divergence between the North and South became entrenched in public policy making.[59]

According to LN supporters and cultural dualists (those that believe that Italy has a dual political culture), the differences between North and South are not only economic, but also social. First, there is the pervasiveness of organized crime groups such as the Mafia (Sicily), 'Ndrangheta (Calabria) and Camorra (Campania) in the South.[60] Second, they have suggested that the South is characterized by the lack of an entrepreneurial spirit. Any entrepreneurial spirit that was

present has been suffocated by organized crime groups using extortion.[61] Lastly, cultural dualists suggest that the South is characterized by personalism. Southerners have strong ties to individuals, which explains the pervasiveness of clientelism, and the greater use of the *voto di preferenza* (preference vote) in the South than in the North. Personalism also explains the tendency among southerners to apply particularistic criteria to most situations (as opposed to universal criteria).[62]

Furthermore, the emergence of new anti-*partitocrazia* forces signals the growing importance in the division between the centre and periphery. The centre (state) is growing more distant from the periphery (civil society) because of its antiquated method of governing (*partitocrazia*). In effect, the new cleavage dimension that is emerging in the Italian party system is one between tradition, represented by the centre, and modernity, embodied by the northern/central periphery. The reason the state-civil society division is associated with the North-South split is because by the 1980s the North was a well developed economic periphery.[63] In effect, both new cleavages reinforce one another.

Many northerners now view the centralized state as the source of local problems and do not believe the traditional parties can deal with the major problems plaguing Italy.[64] The governing parties' monopolistic use of state resources to garner electoral backing may have consolidated support in the South, but it alienated many northern voters.[65] In this environment

of alienation, the LN and the *Rete* are offering voters an alternative to the governing parties by advocating an end to *partitocrazia*.

The rise of new political movements could be attributed to the failure of the governing political class to effect substantial political modernization. The state, which has been dominated by the DC political machine for the past 45 years, does not represent modern principles, but instead embodies the features of a clientelistic state.[66] The LN has attempted to defend the liberties of the individual and the local community from an intruding state (centre) that represents stagnation, decay and corruption.[67]

The attacks of the LN against the centre are partially founded upon the attempts to decentralize power in Italian politics since the 1970s.[68] In addition, the fundamental socioeconomic and cultural changes that occurred in Italian society since the 1950s made the region rather than the nation the locus of economic advancement, partisan association and governmental legitimization.[69] Rapid economic growth in most regions of northern Italy in the 1960s and 1970s drew these regions closer to Northern Europe, while Rome and the South appeared to grow more distant. By the 1980s, a burgeoning northern Italy was still part of a Mediterranean, archaic and bloated Italian state, that faltered in its attempt to extricate itself from the iron jaws of *partitocrazia*.[70]

In short, a division that is becoming more salient in

Italian society centres on a division between a modern civil society (periphery) located primarily in the North and North-Centre, and a state (centre) controlled by an overly pervasive governing class. The centre-periphery cleavage is becoming more important in galvanizing voters than cleavages based on religion, class and ideology.[71] New political forces, especially the LN, have been able to capitalize on the yearning of most Italians for a restoration of the political system.[72] The emergence of the North-South and centre-periphery cleavages indicates that the Italian party system is in the midst of a transition, which has been accelerated by the fall of communism.

Conclusion

This chapter examined changes in the very nature of the Italian party system. There was extensive fragmentation of the party system and there was an increase in support for new political movements. A brief discussion about the nature of the LN revealed that it was more a radical right-wing populist party than a catch-all party. Moreover, the chapter found that the LN's electoral appeal was based on four factors: anti-*meridionalismo*, anti-immigration, regional identity and anti-*partitocrazia*. Lastly, the appearance of new political forces indicated that the North-South and the centre-periphery cleavages are becoming more important in the Italian political system.

These developments have created a number of serious challenges for the PDS and the DC. The next chapter briefly

describes and analyzes the salient political events since the April 1992 national election and assesses their impact on the DC and PDS. As a result, a prognosis is offered on the future development of the Italian party system.

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Chapter Six: Conclusion, Current Developments in the Italian Party System and the Political Future of the DC and PDS

This paper has attempted to explain the decline in electoral support for the Italian Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI)/ the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), with the objective of providing a better understanding of the degree and direction of change in the Italian party system. This chapter includes a restatement of the thesis, a summary of the study's findings and a discussion of their implications for the Italian party system in general. In addition, a synopsis of key political developments since the April 1992 national election is presented, and their implications for both parties are discussed. Finally, a forecast about the future of the Italian party system with particular reference to the DC and PDS is offered.

Summary

The main argument advanced in this paper is the following: the decrease in the electoral support for the DC and PCI/PDS is primarily the result of political factors and only secondarily the result of societal changes. Political factors include each party's strategy and the resolution of the communist question (the collapse of communism in Eastern

Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the end to the Cold War). Societal changes encompassed socioeconomic and demographic (structural) changes and the weakening of the Catholic and Communist subcultures.

Chapter Three first examined the relationship between socioeconomic and demographic changes and the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI. The major economic change in Italy was the transition from an agrarian economy to a post-industrial economy within a thirty year period. Demographic changes included the entry of young voters into the electorate in the mid-1970s and the decline in support for the DC among women.

The structural approach to the study of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI had several weaknesses. First, socioeconomic changes did not directly lead to electoral changes because both the DC and PCI were supported by a broad collection of social classes. Second, the influence of demographic variables, such as youth and gender, on the electoral support of both parties was more a function of secularization and modernization, twin processes undermining the Catholic and Communist subcultures.

The study revealed that structural changes, in and of themselves, did not directly cause the decline of the DC and PCI. In other words, these changes did not necessarily result in a decline in support for either party. In an attempt to maintain the support of occupational and social groups

affected by structural changes, both parties responded by devising political strategies. The structural approach is also flawed since it assumes that party systems are strictly structured by social cleavages that are generated by the socioeconomic system. In addition, this model cannot account for sudden shifts and changes in voter support. This method of analyzing electoral change ignores the fact that political factors and political parties can also produce change in the party system. In short, the structural approach provided a weak and incomplete explanation of the electoral decline of the DC and PCI.

Chapter Three also investigated the relationship between the decline of the Catholic and Communist subcultures and the decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI. The most obvious indicator of the decline of the Catholic subculture is the decline in Church attendance. With a decreasing pool of practising Catholics, the Church and its lay associations exerted less influence over Italian voters. Many Catholic organizations also distanced themselves from the DC and did not adamantly support the party as they had in the past. Indicators that demonstrated a decline in the Communist subculture included a less sympathetic attitude towards the CGIL and the former-U.S.S.R and a decrease in unionization rates.

A study of the waning of Italy's two dominant subcultures showed that the share of the electorate that belonged to

either subculture gradually decreased and that the degree of attachment slowly declined as well. Equally important, this study found that belonging to a subculture was a matter of degree rather than a matter of belonging or not belonging. Core members of a subculture were more likely to vote for the party that was associated with the subculture than those on the periphery of the subculture, which indirectly explained some of the decline in voter support for the DC and PCI.

Like the structural changes, the subcultural thesis had some faults. First, the weakening of the subcultures eroded party attachments and created more opinion voters, but this did not necessarily result in a decline in electoral support for the DC and PCI. Although a sizeable share of the electorate was no longer strongly attached to either subculture, this did not preclude the DC and PCI from devising strategies that would capture these voters. In brief, both explanations in Chapter Three assumed that environmental changes directly led to an electoral decline in support for the DC and PCI. However, these interpretations were too deterministic and ignored the primary importance of political factors. Moreover, they do not explain the fact that the DC vote remained resilient until 1992.

Chapter Four examined political factors in the electoral decline of the DC and PCI. First, the crisis and collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union eroded the electoral support for the DC and PCI/PDS. Although the PCI

distanced itself from Soviet communism, many Italians perceived that the PCI was still linked to communism internationally during the mid-to-late 1980s. Consequently, a significant portion of the population were extremely wary of the PCI and when communism collapsed in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, many Italians, especially young people, associated the PCI with the discredited and failed communist regimes in Eastern Europe. This image of the PCI was exacerbated by the governing parties, especially the DC and PSI, that the PCI could not be trusted. In brief, the PCI was discredited as an alternative to the DC regime among many reformist voters because the PCI adhered to a philosophy that was bankrupt.

Second, the resolution of the communist question also contributed to the decline of the DC because it was the main benefactor of the anti-communist vote, providing its *raison d'etre* and permitting it to remain in power for the last 45 years.[1] The DC was the main benefactor of the anti-communist vote because the PCI could not come to power in a country closely allied to the U.S. Since the PCI could not form a government, an opposition that could replace the ruling DC coalition was unlikely until the communist issue disappeared. The fact that the PCI/PDS was excluded from government between 1947 and 1993 demonstrates that the evolution of the Italian party system and Italian politics in general, closely followed developments in the Cold War.[2] The discussion revealed that the Cold War gap, at both the domestic and international

levels, was one of the most important factors shaping postwar politics in Italy.

With the probable exception of Japan, the fact that the DC was adversely affected by the collapse of communism is peculiar to the Italian party system. In the party systems of most other western democracies, the collapse of communism has primarily weakened the left. However, in Italy, the collapse of communism has not only negatively affected the PCI, but has contributed to the collapse of the DC regime. (DC and small centrist parties with which it governed.) Although this is a deviation from the conventional argument, the way in which the collapse of communism affected the Italian party system is understandable given the fact that the DC regime remained in power primarily because of its anti-communist stance.

Chapter Four also examined the political strategies of both parties to demonstrate that, in a period with more political competition amongst parties and voter volatility, the DC and PCI followed strategies that failed to garner the support of opinion voters. The DC responded to the changing socioeconomic circumstances by attempting to shed its increasingly corrupt and negative public image. However, the party failed largely because of the leadership's inability to curb the power of factions.[3] More specifically, De Mita's attempts to renew the DC and transform it into a moderate conservative party failed because the DC could not resolve the dilemma between southern exchange voters, who favoured the old

DC of patronage, and northern opinion voters, who wanted an end to patronage and favoured good, efficient and honest government.

Since the DC was unable to steer a clear reformist course, its leadership continued to rely on a negative programme, which included anti-communism, Catholicism and clientelism to garner electoral support. This technique was suitable before 1990, but by this time, secularization had weakened Catholicism, the collapse of communism rendered the anti-communist vote irrelevant and the economic recession dried up the public resources available for patronage. Despite repeated calls for reform from within the party, the DC leadership did not realize that it had to give voters positive reasons to support the party. Instead the DC continued to define itself by what it opposed rather than by what it supported, which proved disastrous in the April 1992 election when the DC's support fell below the 30 per cent mark for the first time in its history.

The PCI/PDS reacted to the changing socioeconomic and cultural environment by adopting strategies that would legitimize the party as a credible alternative to the DC regime. These strategies failed to achieve their objective because the party did not resolve a fundamental division between its left and right wings. The PCI's strategies since the 1970s have undermined the party's credibility as a reformist alternative among left-wing and moderate centre-left

voters.

For most of the 1970s, the PCI followed the "Historic Compromise" strategy, which tried to effect significant changes in Italy and legitimize the PCI as a governing party by cooperating with the DC. However, the PCI was not able to achieve significant reform or able to legitimize itself as a governing party. Instead, its cooperation with the DC tainted its reformist image.

The Historic Compromise created the impression in the minds of many leftist voters that the PCI no longer represented a political force that could effect substantial change. Consequently, the PCI lost votes in the 1979 election primarily to parties on its left. Moreover, since the PCI never obtained cabinet posts it did not legitimize itself as a governing party among centre-left voters.

For most of the 1980s, the PCI followed the "democratic alternative", which advocated an alliance with the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and other progressive forces. This strategy was ambiguous since it attempted to reconcile the left and right wings of the party and because the PSI was hostile towards the PCI. This strategy included overtures to radical social movements, making many centre-left voters reluctant to support the PCI. By the late 1980s, the strategy had failed and party secretary Achille Occhetto responded by launching a series of substantial reforms that culminated with the dissolution of the PCI and the formation of the PDS.

However, this development failed to resolve the division between the left and right wings and resulted in an ambiguous political line, which made many voters wary of the PDS.

Chapter Five discussed changes in the Italian party system, such as party fragmentation and the rise of new political movements challenging the DC and PCI for national power such as the *Rete* and the *Lega Nord* (LN). The rise of the LN also indicated the growing importance of the North-South split and the division between the centre and periphery. This is relevant because it shows that the Italian party system, which was primarily based on religious and ideological cleavages in the past, is being structured by other cleavages.

New Developments

The key political developments since the April 1992 election include the ongoing *tangentopoli* investigations, local and administrative elections in June 1993, the April 18, 1993 referendum and the approval of the new electoral law on August 4, 1993.

The ongoing *tangentopoli* investigations, which began in February 1992, have implicated roughly 150 members of Parliament who are under investigation for offenses varying from corruption, bribery, illegal party financing, extortion, collusion with organized crime and even murder.[4] Those being investigated include three former prime ministers (Bettino Craxi, Ciriaco De Mita and Giulio Andreotti), former cabinet ministers and well known businessmen. The most common charge

is taking bribes in exchange for awarding contracts.

Table 6.1
June 1993 Local Election Results
(as a percentage of the total vote from party lists)

LN	28.3	MSI	6.3
DC	19.3	PLI	5.5
PDS	16.2	Greens	3.3
PSI	9.1	L. Pannella	3.2
RC	7.9	Rete	3.2
PRI	7.9	PSDI	2.9

Source: Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p. 10.

The June 1993 local elections, which took place in selective areas and involved 11 million voters[5], were the first significant elections in light of the recent bribery scandal. The results indicated several key points. First, the traditional governing parties did poorly and only received a combined total of 36.8 per cent of the vote, with the DC and PSI incurring the largest losses.[6] In particular, the DC fell to 19.3 per cent of the vote, down 10.3 since the last local elections.[7] (See Table 6.1.) The continued decline of the governing parties suggests that the traditional centre is disappearing.[8]

Second, most observers suggested that the principal victors in this election were the LN and the PDS. The LN received 28.3 per cent of the vote, up 16.3 per cent from the last local elections. Nonetheless, the LN vote in June is a bit skewed because most of the key elections were held in the North.

Third, the LN became the plurality party in the North and

the PDS was the plurality party in the centre (the traditional "red zone") and the DC, despite its decline, continued to be the plurality party of the South.[9] Table 6.2 suggests that Italian voters are growing more divided along regional lines.

Table 6.2
A Regional Breakdown of the June 6, 1993 Local Elections
(as a percentage of valid votes cast)

	North	Centre	South
LN	32.0	1.6	-
PDS	10.7	22.0	9.1
DC	10.4	20.1	28.3

Source: Panorama, June 20, 1993, p. 39.

Another important event was the referendum held on April 18, 1993 in which roughly 83 per cent voted to abolish the proportional representation (PR) electoral system used to elect the Senate. This vote clearly demonstrated that Italians wanted to abolish PR and replace it with a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system.[10] Many Italians saw electoral reform as a way of providing more honest, efficient, and responsible government. This referendum provided the impetus for electoral reform, which the political parties have been squabbling over for the last decade.

The last important event was the approval of a new electoral law on August 4, 1993. Two ballots will be used to elect the Chamber of Deputies in the future. The first ballot allows voters to elect 75 per cent of the deputies utilizing a single member plurality system. The second ballot will be

used to elect the remaining 25 per cent using a PR system. Only parties with at least 4 per cent of the vote can be awarded seats by PR.[11]

In contrast, only one ballot will be used to elect the Senate. Similar to the lower house, 75 per cent of the Senate seats will be elected employing the single member plurality system. The other 25 per cent will be elected using PR. Unlike the election to the lower house, no threshold is required before seats are allocated by PR.[12]

The Implications of the New Developments for the DC and PDS

Although the bribery scandal has involved all the traditional political parties (with the exception of the MSI), the DC and the PSI have been most adversely affected by it. The public, especially in the North, is growing exceedingly hostile towards the traditional governing parties and is tired of their corrupt practices. The decline in support for the DC in the June 1993 elections demonstrates that it is in a deep political crisis. The election results caused Ermanno Gorrieri, a Catholic sociologist, to state that the DC has ceased to be a key protagonist in Italian politics.[13] While this comment sounds a bit hasty, the DC needs to take action in order to reverse the trend or, at least, stop the decline.

The PDS, although not as heavily involved in the *tangentopoli* scandal, has been hurt by the arrest of the PCI's treasurer in Turin, Primo Greganti, who has been charged with illegal party financing. These charges have diminished

the credibility of the PDS as an anti-corruption party. Hence, most voters now believe that the PDS is no different than all the other traditional parties.

On the other hand, the PDS appeared to arrest its electoral decline and did particularly well in the red zone. The PDS was successful in these elections because of its alliances with other parties of the left.[14] However, on its own, the party did very poorly in areas outside the red zone. For example, in the cities of Turin and Milan, the PDS came fourth behind its left-wing rival, the Communist Refoundation.[15]

The new electoral law may compel small political parties to dissolve and join larger political formations or ally themselves with larger parties in pre-electoral pacts. Likewise, the DC and PDS may have to form electoral alliances if they hope to win where they are not the plurality party or they might target specific ridings where they have a good chance of winning.[16]

Between the DC and PDS, the DC has been most affected by recent developments. In response, DC party secretary Mino Martinazzoli launched another effort to reform the party. Martinazzoli characterized the reform of the DC as "rinnovare senza rinnegare" (to renew without renouncing the DC's heritage) and warned that if the DC did not reform itself, it would become a spent political force.[17] In July 1993, the DC's constituent assembly ratified a motion to change the name

of the party. The constituent assembly recommended that the DC change its name to the *Partito Popolare* (Popular Party).

Besides a cosmetic name change, the DC is adopting rigid moral rules to clean up its tainted image. For instance, those who are being investigated, standing trial and convicted of offenses while in public office will not be allowed to renew or obtain membership. Although the DC plans to reform itself, it is uncertain how the public will react. Some voters may see its latest attempt to reform itself as a cynical ploy to hold onto power. One thing is certain: the DC will need to convince voters that its renewal is genuine.

The latest developments and their impact on the DC and PDS are not surprising given the discussion in previous chapters. The recent crackdown on political corruption and the fervent opposition to the *partitocrazia* have largely occurred because of the decline of communism and the end to the Cold War. In this post-Cold War environment, both the DC and PDS have failed to offer voters clear alternatives to the political programme of the LN.

The Future of the Italian Party System

With Italy's new electoral law in place, many foreign journalists expect that party fragmentation will disappear. In addition, they believe that the new electoral law will eliminate the unstable coalition governments which have vexed Italy since 1945. However, these predictions underestimate the degree of division that still exists in Italy today and make

various assumptions.

Party fragmentation may be eliminated or, at least, contained, if political aggregation occurs amongst Italy's current political parties. If no aggregation occurs, Italy might be faced with a situation in which no single party obtains more than 30 per cent of the vote, preventing any party from winning a majority of the seats.[18] Hence, without political aggregation, party fragmentation will continue and stable majority governments cannot be formed, thereby undermining one of the reasons a new electoral law was introduced (to provide stable, purposive governments).[19]

The problem of party fragmentation is compounded by growing regional divisions. Accordingly, some observers are discussing the scenario of the "3 Italys".[20] Many observers foresee a North dominated by the LN, a Centre (the red zone) loyal to the left, especially the PDS, and a South dominated by the DC and other traditional political parties.[21] Hence, national political parties with representation in all parts of the country could disappear. Under a primarily majoritarian electoral system, regional divisions could be magnified and a regionally fragmented parliament could emerge, especially if political aggregation does not occur. In short, due to continued political fragmentation and regional divisions, seven or eight parties may be represented in Parliament.

Another school of thought foresees an Italian party system with an alternation in power between a centre-left or

progressive pole and a centre-right or conservative pole.[22] The party system has been divided into three poles (left, centre and right) with the DC dominated centre governing Italy for roughly 45 years. However, with the disappearance of Communism and the decline of Catholicism, a bi-polar system is more probable.[23]

Nonetheless, the problem with this prediction is that there are many divisions within both poles. The centre-left is divided between materialists (Communist Refoundation (RC), parts of the PSI and PDS) and postmaterialists (Greens, Radical Party). It is also divided on economic issues with the Republican Party and the PSI more laissez-faire oriented than the other parties. In addition, the long standing rivalry and animosity between the PSI and PCI/PDS and a newly developed one between the RC and PDS may hinder the formation of a united progressive pole. Finally, a united progressive pole is unlikely since the divisions and ambiguity within the PDS have not disappeared.

The centre-right is also divided. The DC and the LN are divided on the question of centralization with the former favouring a strong central government and the latter favouring a federal system with a weak central government. In addition, the LN is more laissez-faire than the DC, which has invariably used the state to intervene in the economy. Moreover, given the LN's criticism of the DC and the regime, it is difficult to see how both parties could form a centre-right alliance.

A bipolar system would have been more likely if Italy adopted a majoritarian electoral system with a second round of voting. This system encourages political aggregation and facilitates the formation of stable coalition governments.[24]

The Future of the DC and the PDS

The April 1993 referendum on electoral reform and the results of the June 1993 local elections indicate that Italy is headed for change. The post-Cold War Italy is marked by increased electoral competition and greater electoral volatility at the polls. Hence, it is difficult to speculate how the DC and PDS will fare in the next national election which is likely to occur in the spring of 1994.

An examination of two key pillars of DC support (clientelism, Catholicism) may give an indication of where the DC is headed. Clientelism will probably provide the DC with votes in the next election, especially in the South. However, the use of clientelism is problematic for several reasons. First, the use of clientelism runs the risk of losing more among northern voters. Second, the resources available for clientelism are in short supply because of the recession and Italy's huge public debt. Third, clientelistic voters in the South might abandon the DC and its traditional allies and support the party or parties that appear likely to form the next government.[25]

Catholicism is also a dwindling source of support for the DC. Many observers interpreted the June 1993 local election

results as the end to the political unity of Catholics (i.e., practising Catholics vote for the DC).[26] Due to the DC's corrupt image, many practising Catholics have abandoned the DC and supported the LN and *Rete*. However, the DC could recapture some of these voters if it genuinely reforms itself. Moreover, since secularization has bottomed out, the pool of practising Catholics has not fallen, which is good news for a party whose main source of support comes from practising Catholics.

Recent polls and election results indicate that the DC is receiving nearly 20 per cent of the vote, which has placed the DC's status as Italy's plurality party in peril.[27] A recent poll found that only 52.7 per cent of DC voters remained loyal to the party between the April 1992 election and the June 1993 elections.[28] This figure is not encouraging for a party trying to arrest its electoral decline. The growing "southernization" of the DC's support threatens to split the party into North and South wings, which would be political suicide for the DC and dangerous for the country.[29]

More importantly, it is too hasty to relegate the DC to the dustbin of political history. The party still has strong support in the South and adequate support (around 20 per cent) in the Centre and North-East. Although only half its voters remained loyal, the DC only lost a third of its 1992 support in the June 1993 elections, which suggests that the DC may have obtained votes from the other governing parties (PLI, PSDI, PRI, PSI). Hence, based on present conditions, it is

likely to be Italy's third largest party. Nonetheless, the *tangentopoli* scandal continues to hurt the DC's electoral support as the results of the November 1993 local elections indicated. To retain its plurality status, the DC will have to regain some of the voters that now support the LN. A recent poll suggested that the Italian electorate is becoming more volatile, which provides the DC (or PPI) with an occasion to recapture voters by projecting an image of reform and offering voters a constructive programme [illegible].[30] Although no longer dominant, a newly reconstituted DC will still have a role to play in the Italian party system and could possibly be part of a coalition with the PDS.

The June 1993 elections confirmed that the PDS is still the largest party on the left. However, the PDS is competing against the RC for industrial workers in the North and against *Rete* for liberal Catholic voters. Occhetto is trying to keep all the parties on the left within a progressive pole and hopes to form a pre-electoral coalition with some of them.[31] This would at least increase the PDS' chances of leading the next government. However, this progressive coalition contains many disparate elements and it may be difficult to devise coherent policies that all parties support. Such an alliance may contain extremist elements like the RC, which could scare voters from supporting the coalition.[32]

In short, the PDS is still a dominant political force in Italian politics.[33] Even if the PDS does not ally itself

with other parties, the latest poll results predict that the PDS may emerge as Italy's largest party.[34] Consequently, it may lead the next coalition government, which could consist of the PDS and four or five smaller progressive parties or the PDS and one of the larger parties (DC or LN).

Conclusion

This study showed that both the DC and PDS, and the Italian party system are in a state of flux. The next Italian national election may result in a change in the composition of government and a fundamental realignment of the Italian party system. This realignment, however, is not peculiar to Italy, but could possibly happen in Canada where the Reform party and the *Bloc Quebecois* are threatening the traditional political parties. These changes suggest that new cleavages are emerging in both political systems.

Italy no longer is a unique democracy in which one party (the DC) dominates government and one party is excluded from government (the PCI). Instead the Italian party system is beginning to resemble the party systems of other western democracies, which are characterized by an alternation of parties in government and high levels of voter volatility. In the future, a bipolar system may eventually emerge.

Endnotes

1. "Political Reform? Smash the Existing Party System," The Globe and Mail, November 30, 1992, p. A19.

2. "The Rebirth of Italian Politics," The Globe and Mail, April 1, 1992, p. A14.

3. Alexander Stille, "Leader's Trials Show How Italy has Changed," The Globe and Mail, March 29, 1993, pp. A1; A9.

4. Alexander Stille, "All Crooked Roads Lead to Rome," The Globe and Mail, March 16, 1993, p. A1.

5. Maurizio Marchesi, "Ha Stravinto Lui, Ma...", Epoca, April 27, 1993, p. 14.

6. Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p. 10.

7. Ibid.

8. "Nasce la Seconda Repubblica," Corriere Canadese, June 23-24, 1993, p. 3.

9. Nasce, p. 3; Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p. 10; Manuela Grassi, "Tempesta del Nord," Panorama, June 20, 1993, p. 39.

10. Sergio Romano, "E' Solo L'Inizio," Epoca, April 27, 1993, p. 8.

11. "Approvata la Nuova Legge Elettorale," Corriere Canadese, August 6-7, 1993, p. 1.

12. Ibid.

13. Paolo Mieli, "Sinistra e Non Sinistra," Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p.1.

14. Ibid.

15. "Le Cifre Della Svolta," Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p. 1.

16. Paolo Conti, "E' Quello che Vota il Carroccio l'Elettore piu' Fedele al Partito," Corriere della Sera, June 24, 1993, p. 5.

17. "Vince Martinazzoli, la DC Cambia Nome," Corriere Canadese, June 30-July 1, 1993, p. 3.

18. Giuliano Amato, "La Sinistra e le Riforme," Panorama, June 20, 1993, p. 55; Giorgio Galli, "Un Rischio per la Nuova Italia: il Bipolarismo Imperfetto", Panorama, June 20, 1993, p. 35.

19. Renzo Rosati, "Come Sara' L'Italia del Si'," Panorama, April 25, 1993, p. 40.

20. Paolo Conti, "Piu' che Tre Italie, Cento Comuni," Corriere della Sera, June 8, 1993, p. 1; Arnaldo Bagnasco, Tre Italie: La Problematica Territoriale nello Sviluppo Italiano (Bologna, 1977).

21. Conti, Tre, p. 1.

22. Stefano Brusadelli, "Clintoniani d'Italia, Unitevi!" Panorama, April 25, 1993, pp. 42-44; Massimo Franco, "Diamoci una Moderata," Panorama, April 25, 1993, pp. 44-5; "An Analysis of the June 1993 Local Elections," CHIN Radio 1540 AM, June 7, 1993; June 21, 1993.

23. Franco, p. 44; Brusadelli, p. 43.

24. Galli, p. 35.

25. Mark Donovan, "Party Strategy and Centre Domination in Italy," West European Politics, 12:4 (Oct. 1989), p. 124.

26. Antonio Padalino, "Non Moriremo Democristiani," Panorama, 20 June 1993, p. 48.

27. "DC, una Catastrofe se si Votasse Oggi," Corriere Canadese, April 14-15, 1993, p. 3.

28. Conti, Carroccio, p. 5.

29. "DC alla Resa dei Conti," Corriere Canadese, June 25,-26, 1993, p. 2.

30. Conti, Carroccio, p. 5.

31. Mieli, p. 1.

32. Gianni Baget Bozzo, "Elogio dell' Ambiguita," Panorama, June 20, 1993, p. 38.

33. Ugo Magri, "Chi Manderemo In Aula," Epoca, April 27, 1993, p. 20.

34. Ibid., p. 21.

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